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# REPORT from The FOOTLIGHTS



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*Photo by Milne, Arbroath*

**The late G. R. THOMSON, as 'Rob Roy' captured**

# Fairport from the Footlights.







**THE AUTHOR**

# 'Red-Light' Recollections



Representing the hitherto  
Unwritten Story of

## Forty Years of Fairport from the Footlights

TOLD IN CHAPTERETTES

BY

P. CHARLES CARRAGHER

(RAY GARRICK)

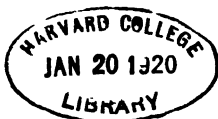
Author of 'A Society Princess' (Comedietta), 'Bitter Almonds,'  
'My Spanish Capture,' 'The Red Cloak,' and 'Stories of the Stage.'

ARBROATH: T. BUNCLE & CO.  
1906



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*Wendell fund*

' Do thou entwine a chaplet fine,  
Of tender thoughts the bearer;  
Bring back the days of auld lang syne,  
When Fairport was still fairer.'

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## Prologue.

IN his ruminations on the identity of his fellow-traveller to the North, Monkbarns, in the early pages of 'The Antiquary,' muses on the possibility of Lovel being a young actor on his way to the opening of 'the little theatre at Fairport.' The period of the novel is near the end of the eighteenth century ; and Sir Walter Scott, with the correctness of local detail so characteristic of his immortal work, had doubtless in view the then new place of entertainment in Horner's Wynd, Arbroath. The striking consistency of the allusion with actual fact inclines one to the supposition that amidst the audience of this quaint playhouse may have sat the distinguished visitor to the town which his genius was to make famous for ever.

But between that far-off time when the monks played their morality and miracle plays within the great Abbey or upon their uncurtained playground, the Abbey Green, and the middle of the eighteenth century, not long before the period of Sir Walter's reference to the 'little theatre,' the history of dramatic representation in 'Fairport' lies behind an impenetrable veil. Yet the town of St Thomas is one that rings with dramatic traditions—traditions of which to the present hour its sons are proud ; and great names and stirring triumphs come through the mists of recollection. They are engraven on the popular memory ; they give eloquence to the 'cracks' of the old ; they are familiar on the lips of the

young. There are gods of drama whom young Arbroath has been taught to worship, and woe be to him who does not revere their hallowed names.

There are many who when the Trades Hall was closed for ever as a theatre must have felt as did the writer of some now famous lines regarding—

The old house endeared by fancy's spell,  
Where memory sees through long departed years  
A train of joys and sorrows, smiles and tears.

Here long ago the grandsire, once a boy,  
Felt his first raptures of dramatic joy,  
And hailed, returning with revolving time,  
The marvels of the Christmas pantomime.

Here the staid matron, then a maiden shy,  
First heard from Romeo's breast the lover's sigh ;  
By Juliet's lips first heard the love expressed,  
That since has made her heart and household blest.

The melodrama taught us here to glow  
With hate for wrong and sympathy for woe,  
Till the broad farce soon dried the tears we shed,  
And sent us tired with laughing home to bed.

The 'memories' embodied in the following pages are written with the fervour of one who was associated with the theatrical life of Arbroath from an early time, and at the urgent solicitation of a wide circle at home and far away who, having seen several sketches in the *Arbroath Guide*, have desired that a fuller record should be enclosed in printed volume before the impressions have become effaced by time and the 'red lights' of the stage have grown dim.

In responding to this widespread public desire an opportunity has been afforded for presenting local side-lights and features hitherto unpublished.

Acknowledgments are due for many favours conferred

by well-known friends in Arbroath and elsewhere. Enthusiastic has been the help of well-wishers, and in writing these pages a fact here and an 'auld farrant' remembrance there have given to the 'memories' the benefit of 'confirmations strong as proofs of holy writ.' The writer is nevertheless conscious that everything the book contains can hardly be expected to bear the authenticity of the Pentateuch.

The common bond of affection which unites the writer and his readers may excuse an occasional digression from the main theme, although it is in devout keeping with the subject that one should go a little out of the way to dwell on that kindness of heart and character for charity which the breath of the footlights so often stimulated and fanned.







# 'Red-Light' Recollections

of the

## Arbroath Stage.

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### I.

#### Arbroath Theatre in the Days of George The Third.

T



THE key to Arbroath's theatrical annals is provided in Hay's 'History of Arbroath,' wherein we learn that 'King Lear' was produced for the first time in the town at the 'New Theatre' on 21st May 1793. So if there was a 'new' theatre in that year, what of the old? Of its site, its owners, or the great ones who played in it, little can be told. But this we do know.

Dundee had no settled theatre until 1810; many important towns had none at all then; and Arbroath was thus, so far as may be judged, one of the first, if not the first, of provincial towns in Scotland to have a theatre of its own. As the 'new' home of the drama, however, remained in the same neighbourhood for more than a century, the location of the older house probably enough was also in Horner's Wynd (now Commerce Street), through which in olden times rattled the stage-coach. One of its favourite stopping places was the George Inn, and it is natural to suppose that the princes of theatrical state would fix their kingdom near so important a current of traffic.

▲

The 'New Theatre,' leased by a Mr Hamilton, had been built as a theatre, which means that it must have had a complete equipment of stage fittings and scenery—as such stage fittings then were, hall and stage lit by candles in sockets—and possibly a balcony. At that date Edinburgh's first real theatre was not more than twenty-four years old; so that the Arbroathian in the year of the French Revolution had much to be thankful for in having the strolling players to beguile him in his North Sea isolation.

When the 'New Theatre' was required as a stable for the George Inn the rendezvous of the disciple of Thespis was changed to a site across the street :

To such base uses had been put  
The place where Lear had rav'd and Hamlet died.

The tenement of which the theatre formed part afterwards became a tobacconist's shop.

The spirit of dramatic adventure which created the 'stock' days—the difficulties of transport, the handling of much baggage, the ever-varying conditions of public appreciation—soon led to the adoption of long visits, and this allowed the Arbroath folks to enjoy those passing flights of genius which brought to the town many of the great ones of the time. There was 'old Ryder,' who made Arbroath a part of his northern circuit. Producing 'Rob Roy' at Perth for the first time on 22nd June 1818, Corbet Ryder, after touching Dundee, brought his distinguished company to Arbroath. Mrs Ryder was 'Diana.' 'Martha' was played by the daughter of his scene-painter, the lady who afterwards became the wife of the great Macready; and the 'Bailie' was no other than the illustrious Mackay. Ryder's two daughters played the children; one of them afterwards became the wife of the great M'Neill.

Chippendale, in the 'Rivals,' was in the district so early as 1819. It was perhaps to Ryder that we owe that benign encouragement to amateur art which first brought the non-professional and the real into such close union. The first 'gentlemen amateurs' were invited by him to appear in 1821.

Pritchard and Edmund Glover were other celebrities familiar to playgoers, and during succeeding years Arbroath was afforded special facilities for seeing Miss Heath, Mrs Siddons, Shiel Barry, Miss Bateman, Talbot, Creamer, Fred Cooke, Wilson Barrett, and Osmond Tearle.

## II.

### The Trades Hall in the 'Stock' Days.

THE situation and arrangement of the old Trades Hall, which, built in the year of Waterloo for a specific use, ultimately became the successor of the Arbroath Theatre, may be recalled. It entered from a passage close beside a public-house which had given entertainment to all the passing 'stars' and their supporters. The lobby and stairs of the present Court-House formed practically the approach. The actors dressed in what is now the Sheriff's room, and his lordship still walks to the seat of judgment over the classic Thespian way to the stage, which was approached, as it is still, by one or two steps. Other dressing-rooms were beneath—places which, on account of unendurable heat, were termed 'The Inferno'—access to them being by tortuous wooden stairways. The officials of the Court sit in the place of the orchestra. Behind the proscenium was the great sheet of zinc (covered with chalk caricatures) which rolled thunder. There also were the scene plots, the prompter's box, the gas disc, and the overhead gangway, alongside the street side of the stage, from which the scenery was controlled by ropes. It was a very efficient stage, having splendid appointments, including that delight of youth, the trap-door for descent into abysmal depths. On the proscenium appeared an impression of William Shake-

speare, and the 'drop' presented a local view. The balcony of the hall, which remained until recently, was a capacious one, and the 'boxes' or 'dress circle' seats were underneath. The big front window of the hall facing into the High Street formed the back of the stage, a rough 'mountain pass' (in canvas, of course) for years blocking the narrow way behind the maze of ropes and theatre tackle. Far up in the 'flies,' in dangerous proximity to the 'sky-covers,' glared the netwire-protected jets. The auditorium stretched away down Commerce Street to the old-fashioned entrance, with narrow stairway, giving admittance through a bar under private management. Few who ascend to the Hall of Justice to-day realise that they are treading—'as to Parnassus heights'—the approach to the altar of Arbroath's early drama. Up these same stairs climbed one still living genius of the footlights, bearing upon his athletic shoulders—a step-ladder! He was only a 'utility' man then.

There is difficulty in realising the exact point of transition between the 'New Theatre' in Horner's Wynd and the newer theatre in the Trades Hall, but as Arbroath was never without the aroma of the stage, it is unlikely that the interregnum—if it existed at all—would be long. There could be no 'gas disc,' no 'upper jets' for eleven years after the hall was built, for gas was only introduced to the town in February 1826; but the old side lanterns and the footlights of candles would create a mellow, dreamy influence which these days of electrical illumination cannot bring.

### The Old Green-Room.

The Sheriff-Clerk's cosy little bunk on the stairhead was a closet wherein hung the crinkled robes of dramatic state, and the neat little room in which the Sheriff signs his portentous judgments and adjusts his processes is the actual outer dressing-room in which the male members of

the old companies donned the hose and doublet, and congregated with eager interest

To realise those *treasured* rights  
That they expect on treasury nights.

Many a time here must the 'ghost have walked.'

It was a mason named David Hill who designed the Trades Hall, the Town Council, on the petition of the local Trades, feuing off ground at the corner of Horner's Wynd and giving £100 towards the erection of the hall. But its revenue to the Trades fell short, and it passed into private hands. Who would have thought that the design of that son of the seeker of the mysteries of 'perpetual motion' would one day become a source of agony on the question of acoustics? After the Salvation Army had invaded the sanctuary of Thespis, and the bang of the tambourine had drowned out the theatre orchestra, and the shouts of hallelujahs had replaced the chorus of opera-bouffe, the authorities took over the hall for a Court-House, and have for years been playing a game of 'improvement' and experimentation. The hall which echoed to the resonant oratory of M'Neill and Price refuses to carry the voice of the most stentorian of solicitors, the most elocutionary of sheriffs. Its charm disappeared with the boxes and gallery and stage. The acoustics now play 'hide-and-seek' with the local powers; and the shell of David Hill's classic creation has in truth become 'an aching void.'

### III.

## George Rutherford Thomson in the Sixties.

IN speaking of the stage life of the sixties there are at once brought into the focus of recollection associations of one whose name is imperishably enshrined in the history of the Arbroath drama—the late George Rutherford Thomson.

There is difficulty in drawing together the correct particulars of his initiation into the mysteries of stage-land. His experience, it was said, went back to 1850. His stalwart figure, as its shadow is thrown on the filmy screen of memory, must have been less in cubits when he first handled the foils or donned the proud habiliments of his chosen recreation. The stage boy is ever father to the stage man; and just as the famous Tom Powrie got up youthful pieces in a Dundee stable, so we can see in imagination the future hero of local melodrama declaiming to the denizens of some back green or counterpane-shrouded room. It is true in fact to say that he entered the world in a theatrical era, when great 'stars' illumined the firmament. Powrie was then in the height of his popularity. It is true to say in familiar phraseology that Thomson 'was born an actor.' No one can say when he was *not* an actor. The professional and amateur identities became so merged that it was difficult to believe that he had not followed the vocation seriously from the outset. That he must have had talent will be evident to the younger theatre-goers of Arbroath when it is said that in style of elocution as much as in figure and gesture young H. B. Irving of to-day presents, as an old stage hand tells us, by no means a far-fetched resemblance to Thomson when a young man. Such indeed was his appearance when, under the sable cloak of 'Rashleigh,' his whole soul must have been longing for the tartan robes of 'Rob Roy.' His opportunity was not long in coming.

Following upon the re-opening in September 1863 of the Theatre Royal, Dundee, under the management of Miss Goddard, Talbot, supported by George Nelson, had been playing to miserable houses. It was resolved to fall back upon the unfailing expedient, 'Try "Rob Roy."' And who was to be the centre of attraction? Let the bills speak for themselves. On this occasion they have to announce 'THAT THE TITLE-RÔLE WILL BE ENACTED BY G. RUTHERFORD THOMSON, THE CELEBRATED AUCTIONEER OF ARBROATH!' The 'celebrated auctioneer' chosen to be the source of a celebrated 'draw' at the Theatre Royal, Dundee!

### Thomson's Versatility.

As familiar with him in the business 'rostrum' in Dundee as in Arbroath—as much accustomed to his gibes and quips, his flow of sarcasm, his readiness of sardonic rejoinder and loud-spoken raileries, their critical faculties well developed by seeing so many passing histrions—the people of Tayside filled the old theatre.

Most of us know how the part of 'Macgregor' fitted him like a glove. There have been many 'Robs' before and since, but few had so singular a mastery of the Highland passion of the outlaw. His 'capture' was a thing to rouse the senses and for 'gods' to tremble at. But not content with the counter-poised characters of 'Rashleigh' and 'Rob,' he studied the 'Bailie'—the hard, crusty aphorisms of Scott's creation receiving a special reading from the forceful manner of his enunciation. Next to 'Rob Roy' his favourite part was 'Claude Melnotte,' and when the 'Lady of Lyons' was played at the old Royal in Dundee on January 16, 1868, the bills gave out that 'Melnotte' was to be played 'by a gentleman amateur.' But it is not difficult to read into the announcement the name of the only local amateur competent to essay the part. For the shadow of Thomson lingered around the old Royal in those times. In the first few days of January 1869 the Dundee stock company were playing with Joan Bucher, Robert Duncan, Creamer, and Lomax in the casts. Fred Cooke was 'leading man,' and married the 'leading woman,' who was Mrs Lyons, the manageress. Then came a grand farewell benefit prior to Cooke's departure for the United States. This took place on 23rd January 1869, and Thomson was once more the 'draw.' He accomplished a remarkable task by playing the part of 'Rob' in the first and second acts, and of 'Bailie' in the third and fourth; Cooke taking the 'Bailie' in the first and second, and 'Rob' in the third and fourth acts—a singular interchange of rôles. Thomson's dramatic interests soon, however, found a new diversion nearer home.



### Oldest Living 'Bailie Nicol Jarvie.'

What perhaps led to G. R. Thomson's being first drawn to play 'Rob Roy' in Dundee was his successful assumption of that character four months earlier, on 15th May 1863, at a performance in the Trades Hall, Arbroath, for the benefit of the Mechanics' Institute. The occasion represented a splendid union of professional and non-professional talent. The famous Mrs Pollok played 'Helen Macgregor' to Thomson's 'Rob'; the late Mr Watson was the 'Dugal Cratur'; James M'Nicol took the part of 'Rashleigh'; and Jessie Ryder played the double parts of 'Mattie' and 'Diana Vernon.' There is still living in the person of W. D. Thomson, Meadowview, Callander, the exponent of the part of 'Bailie Nicol Jarvie.' The house was crowded, and the performers were able to hand over £15 for the benefit of the Institute, which was considered a very large sum in those days.

'In the jail scene,' this esteemed survivor of the old days tells us, 'my friend, "Rob Roy," forgot his words, and instead of saying "Here's my thumb! I'll ne'er beguile ye" in answer to the "Bailie's" apprehensions regarding his long journey to the Highlands, he said, "I'll gi'e ye a return ticket!"'

On the next occasion that 'Rob Roy' was played it was followed by Scott's 'Twa Drovers.' It was fortunate, however, that Scott himself was not present, as the dialogue was made *on the spot* between G. R. Thomson as 'Robin Oig' and his namesake as 'Harry Wakefield.' The comical thing about it was that although hardly two words of Walter Scott were spoken nobody was aware of the difference but the two Thomsons themselves.

Thus we have to-day, perhaps, in this veteran of the early drama at Arbroath *the oldest living representative of 'Bailie Nicol Jarvie' in Scotland.*





*Photo by J. D. Smith, Arbroath*

**The late J. H. CLARK, as 'Bailie Nicol Jarvie'**

## IV.

Arbroath's First Dramatic  
Company.

IN the kaleidoscopic view which memory presents of those times Howitt and M'Neill come upon the stage. M'Neill had married the eldest daughter of Corbet Ryder, and it was in his stock company that Wilson Barrett made his appearance. M'Neill's 'Rob Roy' was impersonated in Edinburgh for the first time in the winter of 1869, and Arbroath saw the first fruits of his production. He opened the Trades Hall—then Arbroath's only 'Theatre Royal'—in March 1870, with a company which included Henri Corri (who was bass), Haydn Corri (who was baritone), Parkinson, Fanny Harrison, and Madam Corri Gillis. As the natural effect of the magnificent banquet of good things which Arbroath enjoyed during these and prior seasons—the theatre being, as Hamlet says, 'the very age and body of the time'—we find the local enthusiasts giving practical shape to their dramatic aspirations.

Within the back room of the old Shakespeare Bar, snugly ensconced in the northern corner of the School Wynd, long since swept away, there was held one night in 1870 an interesting conclave representing the elements of that first dramatic union out of which much of the local theatrical spirit of to-day has evolved. In the chair, preses by right of his position as 'Boniface,' was James H. Clark, proprietor of the Shakespeare Inn. There were also present—George Rutherford Thomson, George Strachan, Frederick T. Mather, and John Duncan. The names are given in the order of age. It was agreed to name the combination then formed 'The Arbroath Amateur Dramatic Company.' Founded for mutual enjoyment as well as mutual culture, nothing more serious was resolved upon at the outset than a single act of 'Rob Roy' and a comedy 'for males only.' But the matter

grew under the stimulus of Thomson. Was it likely that the activity of one who could play three characters of one drama, and whose voice had electrified the auditors of the old Royal in Dundee, could rest under such modest limitations?

In the initial stages the difficulty of obtaining ladies for such parts as the 'Hostess' and the not over refined 'Jean Macalpine' was got over by an expedient. An advertisement was inserted in the local paper—'Young men wanted to take female parts'; and of several who applied one youth, rising sixteen, was engaged. His trial before these grave inquisitors consisted in singing over a song—then whistled in the streets, but long forgotten—

'A starry night for a ramble  
Down in a flow'ry dell';

and the reading of a part of the playbook. That youth was named Charles Y. Myles.

## V.

### Some Local Thespians.

IN further augmentation of the company which had its appropriate birth in the 'Shakespeare' came Arthur Murphy, then in business in James Street, who played the part of 'Major Galbraith' (taken at a later time by A. Carrie); James Dolan, china merchant, at the head of Lordburn, and afterwards of Perth, whose polite manners and appearance named him for 'Captain Thornton'; and the late Richard Mangan, afterwards chief of another dramatic team. There was also in the company a clever elocutionist named Alexander Buchanan Mackintosh, afterwards of London, and now at the time of writing in County Galway, Ireland, whose duty it was to recite pieces between the play and farce, the necessary waits being rendered less tedious by a song, &c. John Duncan (now Bailie Duncan),





*Photo by J. D. Smith, Arbroath*

**Miss LAUDER, Arbroath's original 'Diana Vernon'**

who played the part of 'MacStuart'; James H. Clark, who was by every right chosen for the 'Bailie'; and George Strachan, who was the first 'Dugal Cratur,' were the moving spirits. There was perhaps no greater enthusiast than Frederick Mather. His labours were invaluable. The new-found delight of seeing their friends in all the glory of sock and buskin, gold-hilted dirk, and majestic villain's cloak soon brought all Arbroath to 'the tiptoe of expectation'; and once properly floated, the concern went merrily on. For years 'The Arbroath' were able to contribute largely from the proceeds of their performances to the poor of the town.

When the company found it expedient to engage ladies for the more important parts, they were successful in securing interested and intelligent exponents of the art. The memory of Miss Lauder as 'Diana,' in her flowing costume of white muslin, with ample embroidery, is an interesting one. Of the others the 'Helen' of Miss Isabella Anderson (afterwards Mrs Robertson), daughter of a former Inspector of Police, stands out distinguished. There are many who can remember the fire she could throw into the 'native heath' declamation. The writer, then a boy, was a comrade of her brother, and had several opportunities of observing her during the progress of careful study. Her appearance on the stage is vividly recalled, the feathered Balmoral and swinging shawl giving real picturesque interest to the character. When, in the Lochard combat, she had led her kilted warriors (they were none too numerous) on to victory, and the two sons of 'Rob Roy' (impersonated by Robert and Alf. Thomson) came with the news of their father's capture, the boys actually appeared to recoil in earnest under the stern flash of her eye and the tragic vehemence of her indignation. One of the lads, now grown to sedate manhood, recalls his boyish impression of the queer little room above the stage where the 'hare's foot' was, and all the thousand and one tremors and anxieties experienced in enacting his small part. During the progress of the company's career Miss Robertson also appeared in the part of 'Helen.'



## VI.

## Colours of Old Theatrical Campaigns.

**T**HERE is no better evidence of the unfading and ineffaceable pride of Arbroath's first figures of the footlights than the survival of certain old bills preserved with all the devotion bestowable on a cause which had many enthusiastic followers.

A gentleman visiting London recently came across an old member of the company who performed in Dove's Hall. He drew forth with loving care a roll of crumpled and fast aging announcements bearing to be printed at the office of the 'Arbroath Guide,' the relics of several grand old theatrical campaigns, the colours of that regiment of Thespian warriors who made the rafters ring as they pursued their majestic triumphs in all the glitter of 'Pizarro's' pompous glory, or the broadsword and kilt of Scotland's national drama. Many of these have gone to their long rest, but there are still several to the fore; one or two at least as eager and anxious for the fray as when they wore the picturesque raiment of the Spanish masterpiece, or clashed swords in wild combat in the 'Pass of Lochard.' From these *antiqua documenta* some interesting casts have been impressed on the pages of this book for preservation.

### 'The Arbroath's' First-Born Effort.

Appended is the bill of the Arbroath Amateur Dramatic Company's *first* public performance on Wednesday, 12th February 1873, under the distinguished patronage of Lieut.-





*Photo by J. D. Smith, Arbroath*

**Miss ANDERSON, Arbroath's original 'Helen Macgregor'**

Col. Dickson and Major Dowall, of the 3rd F.R.V. The full cast is given of

### ROB ROY.

Sir Frederick Vernon, .....	A. M. Buchanan.
Rashleigh Osbaldistone, .....	A. Harcourt.
Francis Osbaldistone, .....	F. T. Mather.
Mr Owen, .....	J. M. Petrie.
Captain Thornton, .....	J. S. Duncan.
Major Galbraith, .....	Alexander Carrie.
Rob Roy, .....	G. Rutherford Thomson.
Dugal Cratur, .....	Edward Strachan.
Bailie Nicol Jarvie, .....	J. Hood Clark.
MacStuart, .....	P. Farquharson.
Saunders Wyllie, .....	Mr Peters.
Andrew Fairservice, .....	Mr Cameron.
Sergeant, .....	Charles Myles.
Hamish and { Sons of } .....	Master R. C. Thomson.
Robert, { Rob Roy, } .....	Master A. Y. Thomson.
Diana Vernon, .....	A Lady.
Mattie, .....	A Lady.
Jean MacAlpine, .....	A Lady.
Helen Macgregor, .....	A Lady.

There is also announced a comic sketch by Mr A. M. Buchanan (Mackintosh), and the performance is to be concluded with 'Luke the Labourer.'

How many, it may be wondered, can recall that night of anxious trial; of unrehearsed and unexpected follies on the part of 'the juniors'; of undeliberated oaths; and dismayed and petrified 'supers': Cameron, as the drunken 'Fairservice,' throwing his 'scone' at the head of Sandy Carrie as that ruddy-painted worthy bellowed the lines of the intoxicated 'Galbraith'; Duncan, Captain of the 'Royals,' with Charley Myles in a red coat, leading on the soldiers; and Thomson, in the unrestrained fervour of the moment, giving his 'captors' a lively time, twisting these trained auxiliaries into limp and astonished mutes. 'I dinna ken fat's up wi' Tamson,' feebly remonstrated one of these to his fellows; 'he just looked at me as if he wis gane to tear me to pieces.'

Deep interest centred in the character of the 'Bailie,' as represented by James Clark. His conception of the

conceited, pragmatical, cautious, pawky 'Nicol Jarvie' is spoken of to this day. One cannot fail to remember his dry caustic rendering of the rebuke to Mattie :

MATTIE—For ye ken the Deacon aye liked his gless.

BAILIE—Ay, ay ; but the Deacon (pronounced 'Dyken') aye liked's *fu'* gless.

Perhaps greater interest, if possible, surrounded the valiant Fred Mather as 'Francis Osbaldistone.' Attired in velvet tunic, gorgeously embroidered, and high Hessian boots, his head adorned by a ribboned wig, a hat and plumes surmounting all, he made a striking impression. Still more striking was his tuft of crape-hair beard and elaborate 'make up.'

## VII.

### The Old Temple of Thespis in Gravesend.

DOVE'S Hall, Gravesend, which became the scene of 'The Arbroath's' histrionic triumphs, presents outwardly to-day much of the appearance it did in the first seventies. It stands, a quaint, battered remnant of better times, near the corner of the street which runs in continuation of Applegate, divided from the house of the famous 'Willie Doo'—to whom it belonged—by an enclosed plot, the branches of an aged tree peeping over the wall to remind us of the once rural and picturesque character of the grounds behind, near which the Brothcock pursues its sullen course. Here, to an Arbroath that seems now very far away, the local Irvings made rousing echoes in the rafters. While old 'Shuttle' Hunter over the way, in his big open workshop, discoursed merry music with his swishing plane, turning out coffins to encase Arbroath's dead, the actors made clinking din as they hammered up their mimic 'palaces' and portable flats to amuse the living. And the





*Photo by J. D. Smith, Arbroath*

**F. T. MATHER, as 'Francis' in 'Rob Roy.'**

people flocked there: up that ancient stairway into its packed, stuffy interior—the scent of oranges filling the stagnant air—to see and laugh, applaud, and hiss in turn.

There are Arbroathians at home, there are Arbroathians in South Africa, in Detroit, all over the world, to one and all of whom the very mention of the Gravesend Hall is the magic password to reminiscent mirth, the masonic key to all the joys of an exile's recollection.

Since the sketches in the 'Guide,' which form the foundation of the present work, were penned, many have given testimony to the attraction of that old hall. Some declare they never missed a performance. One notable Arbroathian from home describes the experiences of a Gravesend 'first night'; the curious feeling of discomfort, which melted away in the laughter of anticipation; the music of the tweaking fiddles, in which the big double bass was prominent; the sounds of Scottish quadrille airs; the tinkling of the warning bell; and the intent, suppressed excitement of the house when the curtain rolled upward, and the auditors followed with bated breath every movement of every figure on the stage.

Of the internal details of the hall there is nothing but the impression left by lively recollection. The theatre was on the mid-flat of the structure, with a neat, well-arranged stage with footlights, well equipped with scenery. The stage was only a few feet above the front seat, the other seats rising gradually behind to form a kind of gallery for the 'gods' at the rear. The dressing-rooms were in what was called the 'pattern loft,' above the theatre, entrance to which was obtained by a trap-stair behind the scenery at the street end of the hall.

It is not vouchsafed to ordinary untheatrical mortals—unlearned in the passion of the stage—to understand how it was all accomplished. But the amateur bravely laughs at difficulties. What are space limits to him whose soul is so broadened by his art? His Quixotic ardour overcometh all, and by outrunning discretion he sometimes leaps obstacles. So that amateur of those days would have found when, hurried up for his 'entrance,' he bounded through the first opening, and looked on astonished while



the audience roared. All that he had done was to walk unconsciously through a stage *fire-place*, so that he looked as if he had been projected down the chimney!

But if the limitations of practicable space did not restrain, neither did the limitations of the playbook. Thus it was nothing wonderful to hear—say in a Spanish play—a reference to Tutties Nook, or in a Scottish drama laid in the valley of the Ettrick a few passing remarks on Arbroath shops!

Thus in the 'Twa Drovers,' or 'Cramond Brig'—time plays tricks with memory, and one forgets which—Thomson, who always availed himself of the opportunity for local sallies, was heard vociferously condemning the brose and declaring it was Cant's meal!—that very respectable provender, forsooth, which supplied nearly all Arbroath, sold in a shop in the High Street not far from Kirk Wynd—long since removed.

An unrehearsed exploit of 'Rob Roy,' which reminds us of the confined character of the stage, was an unlucky thrust of the 'Dugal Cratur's' claymore which lifted away 'Captain Thornton's' wig!

## VIII.

### 'The St Thomas' Company.

**A**BOUT the same time as the Gravesend Company were busy with the interests of the 'bold Rob Roy,' another important organisation was at work dramatically. This had its origin out of the then general system of establishing young men's societies in affiliation with the Catholic following. Dr M'Corry was the first, as far as we have ever learned, to take an active interest in this direction under the auspices of St Thomas' Church. The Rev. Stodart Macdonald carried on the traditions; and even before the club got a hall of its own he permitted its

members to rehearse within the sacred precincts of the church itself—that is to say, in the spacious porch.

There was, however, a strict exclusion of ladies from this early dramatic company, the result of the clerical fiat, which also dealt with the play-books—revising, censoring, expurgating the very simplest of those expletives which are in such plays as ‘Rob Roy,’ for example, as thick as blackberries. The prime mover of this well-superintended society, ‘The St Thomas,’ was the late Richard Mangan, whose wonderful versatility as stage manager and in dramatic authorship and adaptation is remembered. He was author of a lively Irish comedy entitled ‘The Dirty Ten Thousand.’ Mr Mangan was indeed one of the ablest speakers as he was then one of the most active of the Colvill Place community. He was a close reader, and formed one of a little literary band of the early seventies who all of them attained considerable prominence.

With the assistance of the late Matthew M’Kenna, who died recently in Dundee, and who was then interested in journalistic matters in Forfar, as well as of the late Councillor Murty, who was himself a performer, Mangan had just set the theatrical machinery going when the little galaxy of enthusiasts was joined by the brothers James and Peter Carragher, who, coming to the town for the first time in the summer of 1871, gave an added impetus to the work already so well forwarded. Others of the company were James Dolan, before mentioned, who was long choirmaster of St Thomas’ Church, and a member of the Arbroath School Board; Mr Scott, formerly of the ‘Guide’ Office, now an editor in Ireland; John Quinn, now a Parish Councillor of Arbroath; Travers, in railway service at Broughty Ferry; Arthur Murphy, before referred to; the late John Cassidy, at one time proprietor of the Railway Inn, Keptie Street, now demolished; Jack Kelly, still to the fore with vivid recollections of that time; and James Murray, a man of excellent talents, who performed the ‘heavies’ like a professional. Dolan was ‘walking gentleman,’ and the brothers Mackenzie did able service, one acting ‘chambermaid’ parts with astonishing obliteration of his own personality.

B

At this time William Lothian, although also connected with Mr Thomson's company, was taken into the St Thomas as a vocalist, and proved a great favourite. 'Put it down to me' and 'Love among the roses' still leave their haunting refrain.

### Hall in 'The Tanny.'

A hall was first found in the building in Lordburn so long known as 'The Tanny' [Tanworks], entering from the street; in fact, the same which was so long the tinsmith's workshop of Mr Cook. It formed a reading-room as well as a theatre. A stage, elevated only a foot or so from the floor, was bordered by a rude proscenium bearing in papered decoration the classic figures of Thespis and other patrons of the drama. These were not the first theatrical performances held in 'The Tanny.' In the early fifties, when the family known under the generic designation of 'The Browns' were in the zenith of their prosperity, a part of the front block of their extensive works was fitted up as a recreation room, and occasionally theatrical performances were given by the workmen and the clerical staff. Unfortunately no record of the plays or performers is now extant. For years after the hall had been vacated many 'looked in at the open door,' not to see the hammered tin products in process of evolution, but to gaze at the beautiful street scene painted on the south wall by a famous Arbroath artist—the background of St Thomas' stage. Limited as the St Thomas were at first to plays 'for males only' drawn from a book designed 'for college, camp, and cabin,' the players produced 'Cherry Bounce,' 'All at Coventry,' 'The Smoked Miser.' It was in the first of these that the late Councillor Murty appeared as an aged father. As characteristic of the simplicity of the times it is recalled that when John Quinn spoke gravely the lines referable to the indisposition of a pony—

'There she lies upon the straw  
Unable to lift a foot or paw—

a little boy on the front bench ran to the proscenium door to view the pathetic spectacle!

The first appearance of the St Thomas Company in public was on 10th April 1872, when they produced 'All at Coventry,' and two farces, 'D'ye know me now?' and 'No. 1, Round the Corner.' This was for the benefit of a widow. They boldly engaged the Trades Hall for the purpose, and had a great reception. Peter Carragher performed the eccentric 'old man' part as 'Gabblewig of the Pewter and Mutton Platter.' In this company opportunities for delicate localising were not overlooked, as witness this adaptation:

The pleasures of reading are all smoke and vapour,  
Unless 'tis of reading the daily newspaper;  
Oh, ye gods! how I like, as I sip down my tea,  
The *Advertiser*, the *Courier*, the *Penny Guide* to see.

The farce, 'No. 1, Round the Corner,' had always its own sense of localisation, in view of the notoriety of a famous pawn office, entered from the corner of Church Street, and it was the most popular of the town's farces.

### A Second Hall in 'The Tanny.'

Emboldened by the initial success, and finding their efforts too confined, the St Thomas made a shift to a hall farther up Lordburn, reached through a long close and up an outside wooden stair. Here, in a somewhat ammoniated atmosphere, within a hall having accommodation for 300, the main features of the earlier place of entertainment were reproduced as regards scenery, &c. The company now plunged into melodrama, the re-opening taking place on Wednesday, 13th November 1872, when they produced

'The Charcoal Burner,' gentlemen taking the ladies' parts.  
The *dramatis personæ* were:

#### CHARCOAL BURNER.

Povnet Arden, a Misanthrope, .....	James Murray.
Edmund Esdaile, an Officer, .....	George Letters.
Matthew Esdaile, a Miser, .....	Arthur Murphy.
Valentine Verdict, a Humorous )	
Juryman, with song, 'The } .....	Peter Carragher.
Wonderful Well,' .....	
Abel Cole, Haberdasher, .....	Richard Mangan.
Caleb Brown, a disbanded } .....	James E. Carragher.
Soldier, .....	
Godfrey Harrington, Magistrate, .....	Frank Mackenzie.
Barbara, a Maid, .....	James Mackenzie.
Edith Harrington, the Fair Maid } ...	By a Gentleman.
of York, .....	
Mother Grumble, .....	J. Cassidy.

At the first production a howl of laughter greeted the appearance of the police in the arrest scene, the audience recognising the familiar figure of a famous 'bobby' who haunted Lordburn. But it turned out to be only his *clothes*, the figure within having been cleverly 'made up' to suit the supposititious presentment.

Then followed a run of pieces on the part of Arbroath's two dramatic companies, the one (judging from the dates) stimulated to renewed enterprise by the other. Thus the St Thomas produced on 22nd January 1873 a triple bill—'Sarah's Young Man,' 'That Rascal Pat,' and 'Cherry Bounce.' On the very next evening, 23rd January, the Gravesend company produced 'Rob Roy.' Again they produced 'Rob Roy,' this time in the Trades Hall, on the 13th February 1873, adding 'Luke the Labourer' to the production, the St Thomas responding with lively alacrity on the 19th with 'The Charcoal Burner,' 'Sarah's Young Man,' and the 'Limerick Boy.' Arbroath audiences would no doubt be kept busy in those days, as well as the actors, while such keen playing—giving rise to continuous animation and interest—proves that in Arbroath in the seventies a man might well have been pardoned for thinking that—to put it in Biblical phrasing—his 'lines had fallen in pleasant

places.' Tragedy and comedy, tears and laughter in rapid succession! And not a mill closed.

### An Unrehearsed 'Dead Fall.'

On the last-mentioned occasion the 'Fair Maid of York' was impersonated by a Dundee gentleman, a waiter in the White Hart Hotel. A touch of realism was nearly answerable for the undoing of the gentleman who played one of the villains. In the excitement of the moment a pistol presented at the face instead of in the air, and loaded with real powder, brought about—as the same thing did once to the great Langley—very painful consequences. When the shot came the poor fellow dropped like a stone, in stage language 'a dead fall.' 'Well done!' cried the audience as the hero bent over him with the still smoking weapon in his hand. 'Too blessed well done!' shouted from the front G. R. Thomson, whose unerring instinct had told him something was wrong, and who thereupon made for the stage door to render assistance. The victim was carried out to Dr Crichton's surgery in Maule Street and there attended. The accident, serious as it might have been, terminated his stage career only for a time.

### Fire in 'The Tanny.'

'Handy Andy' was produced by the St Thomas on 24th April 1873, this being the first exclusively Irish production of their time. The title-rôle was delightfully rendered by Mangan; Dan M'Crystal was 'Furlong', and J. M'Cormick the irascible 'O'Grady.' In those pre-Boucicaultian days the old-fashioned Irish play had an exceptional charm. Many would realise the truth of the rhymed lines which concluded the play:

So no more words we'll bandy,  
But if ye want a cure for sorrow  
Just think of Handy Andy.

To hear the bursts of laughter that rent the old hall one would indeed have considered it 'a cure for sorrow.' Pity Arbroath has no such dramatic panacea now!

The winter season of the St Thomas opened in the Trades Hall on 6th November 1873 with a triple bill—'The Smoked Miser,' 'Handy Andy,' and 'The Ticket of Leave Man' (farce). Three boy members were introduced about this time to play 'No. 1, Round the Corner,' the youthful precocities they displayed giving rise to much amusement.

As has been said, the St Thomas had found it necessary to acquire quarters farther northward in 'The Tanny.' Here most of the effects of the ground-floor place had been rehabilitated, and a wardrobe had actually become a part of the equipment. Alas for all earthly ambitions! On a Sunday night in April 1874 a great fire devastated the Tanwork, lighting up the town and district for miles round, its 'lowes' seen from such vantage ground as the Brechin Road or the Common imparting a weird, lurid appearance to the Abbey ruins, and creating intense excitement. In the pitiless conflagration away went the hall, dresses, scenery, and everything else. And so the hopes of the St Thomas became blighted, but only for a time, as we shall see.

## IX.

### A Memory of Miss Heath.

I N the month of June 1873 the Trades Hall was renovated and cut off entirely from the spirit premises. The entrance was diverted to a door on the other side of the pend, which opened on an outside staircase, and was carried overhead by a sort of covered bridge to an opening made in the west gable. The 'stage door' is still traceable. What spectres of the great does not its shadow conjure up! A new curtain was made and new scenery painted during that summer for the coming of the accomplished Miss







*Sketch by Author*

**TRADES HALL:** Old Entrance from Horner's Wynd

Heath, with Wilson Barrett in her company. She opened on 7th June a most auspicious season. The discomforts of a summer night in the dingy gallery or in the confined 'boxes' below it were well compensated for. The emotions of the people swayed between 'East Lynne' and 'Lady Audley's Secret,' the story of the latter having just passed through the pages of the 'People's Friend.' Miss Heath had been discovered by the famous Boucicault, and introduced to Charles Kean, and had appeared in Dundee some seven years previously. Outside her heavy histrionic labours she was a lady of singular sweetness and amiability. She stayed in a house in the High Street (near the site of Keith's building), and there is an interesting recollection of her personal charm and simplicity. Her hostess's children had some birds in which she showed deep interest. One day she opened the cage door to pay the little creatures her agreeable compliments, but the window happening to be open, to her utter dismay they flew out and away.

The future tragedian, then simply 'George Wilson,' was in daily attendance upon Miss Heath, and, book in hand, those two real lovers off the stage declaimed to the rafters by day the passages which were to rouse the playgoer by night. Barrett fell in love 'without asking leave.' Miss Heath was said to have smiled at his presumption. As a harlequin his spirit writhed at being seen by her in his scaly tights and wooden lath; and one night, encountering his love round a side wing when in his hated garb, he sprang back to the stage and down through the trapdoor. The romantic story of their wedding at Brechin, and of its first public intimation during a call before the curtain at Arbroath, is too well known to require recapitulation. An Arbroath man interestingly recalls an occasion when he went to see Miss Heath in 'Lady Audley's Secret' at the Trades Hall. Entering the 'dress circle' somewhat late he was surprised at the copious flow of tears proceeding from the soft-hearted audience.

## X.

## Some Distinguished Visitors.

ON 17th November 1873 M'Neill, then manager of the Edinburgh Theatre Royal, opened the Trades Hall for an interesting season. It was natural that he should select, for local interest, 'The Antiquary'; and the special scenery—painted, it is thought, by Arbroath's celebrated artist—D. Buchan Young—contained some fine views of the cliffs and one of the 'Fairport Post Office,' an exact reproduction of the old 'home of letters' in Hill Street. During that week the Arbroath Society produced a series of plays, 'supported by the resident company,' Mr M'Neill taking 'Rob Roy' to enable Mr Thomson to appear in 'Rashleigh,' a part which he assumed with the ease of earlier acquaintance.

It was during this season also that M'Neill produced his burlesque on the Shah, called 'Kissi-Kissi.' His make-up in the garb of the Persian potentate was a 'too palpable hit,' and the piece had to be withdrawn, not before Arbroath had been convulsed with laughter over his funny local allusions. 'And of all places throughout the world,' queried his Grand Vizier, 'which do you think captivated your Majesty's fancy?' In broad, sonorous monotone came the Shah's answer, 'The Provost's Close!' Apart from the topical allusions the Grand Vizier hit off the social characteristics of earlier Arbroath when 'dulse' was a more favourite indulgence than it is now, when the ladies were not ashamed to wear the traces of the mill industry upon their locks—going bare-armed with 'shawlies' to the factory—and when the Medicine Well at Elliot was the favourite walk when Dan Cupid went a-wooing. The time-honoured terminal of ie, 'mannie,' 'grannie,' and so on, was also quietly satirised.

The Vizier, in reporting the Shah's adventures in mixed English, proceeds to speak of his taking at

A town beside the German sea  
His *dolce far niente*,  
And discovered quite  
An appetite  
For *dulce* so much in plenty.

Bare-armed Syrens eyed him askance  
With some dismaying frowns ;  
He saw a trace  
Of queenly grace,—  
The *tow* upon their crowns.

The language of Don Juan  
He soon with ardour spokee,  
'Haiver'—'tuts,'  
'Come on'—'braw-lee,'  
And 'sweet Auckmittee smokee.'

And boldly then addressed himself  
To lady in her 'shawlie';  
She said 'So long,'  
And 'Far-ye-gaen,'  
He answered 'Med-cine Wallie.'

In the same year the Trades Hall was honoured by a visit from Edward Price, who brought a series of Irish plays. Before the close of the season M'Neill came to give him assistance, playing in the 'Colleen Bawn' as 'Myles' to Price's 'Danny.'

It would be impossible to speak of all who passed through Arbroath's chief playhouse at this time. Harry Hicks was early in the field. His daughter, then a child, visits Arbroath often, or at least did recently, under another name. There is still living the 'boy' who, in 'Cramond Brig,' ate the time-honoured sheep's trotters, and enjoyed them too, as he says, for they were no 'property' trotters. There is the recollection about this period of a company of strolling players in 'Rob Roy' who became muddled during the course of the play, owing, it is feared, less to their day's potations than their total unacquaintance with the lines. In the Tolbooth scene

the book was passed openly from hand to hand, the fuddled creatures deliberately reading their parts, and 'Owen' coolly studying his beneath the bedclothes. 'Major Galbraith' was so genuinely drunk that he forgot to yell when the property red-hot poker was applied to his seat of wisdom.

## XI.

### Life in the Amateur World: The Philosophy of 'the Super.'

OF those earlier days—as showing the primitive conception of the fitness of things, and the astounding intimacy between actors and people—a story is told of a certain 'super' who could on no account be got to 'make up.' His pleas, which may be quoted for the benefit of young 'supers' of to-day, are given in his own refined staccato. 'I dinna see fat's the use o'd at a,' he contended. 'Ahm no' gaen a merter ma face wi' the bloomin' (this is not the proper adjective) stuff for a' that's in the pairt especially. I've only tae speak twa lines; guid great! what dis't maiter; and, besides' (looking ruefully at the musty garments), 'I widna wear thae things at ony rate'—then, conscious of their origin perhaps—'ye dunna ken fa's wearin' them. Ahm no jist gaen a di'd.' 'But you must,' persisted his confrères, 'It's in the pairt. Do you no' see the folk'll ken ye?' 'Well,' was his final rejoinder (an unanswerable one, it must be said), 'What about it? They'll ken's at ony rate.' The story is illustrative.

Mergence of identity—the actor's pride—would, even if possible, have been dearly accomplished. For the keen vision of young Arbroath would have penetrated the closest disguise; and it was his wont, on recognition, to offer homely greetings after this fashion—'Tak' aff the hat, Chay'; 'Pu' doon yer slacks, Geordie'; 'Throw awa' the weeg, and gi'e yersel' room'; 'Far did ye steal the pent?' 'Merch a





**Bailie DUNCAN, only Surviving Founder  
of the Arbroath Dramatic Society**

wee tickie smerter, Tam'; 'Hurry up, Sy, wi' yer sojers'; 'Jeck's aff the step'; 'Far did ye get the gun?' And in a conflict of life and death, a broadsword combat say, 'Go for him, Jeck—feenish 'im'; 'Jum, yer soord's roosty.' These are only the more select of the delicate observations thrown across the stage. The 'super' or subordinate was always, of course, the chief source of pleasantry.

### A Hard Flovittate.

The 'super' found that his life was not a happy one. He was as often as not just a living part of the stage machinery, and needed frequent oiling, although danger lay in his libations. Who could grudge him his refreshment as he stood encased to the chin, in 'The Lady of Lyons,' in the wrappings of a gendarme's uniform, unable to bend to lace his shoe; or, in 'Rob Roy,' rigid within the regimental cross gaiters or squeezed into a red coat miles too small for his obese form; flung headlong to the floor in heroic struggles with the chieftain; panting for air under the extinguisher-like weight of a capacious helmet, or asphyxiated with wire and hair and paint—the invariable accessories of stage crime. Such at least were a few of the experiences of the novices as the Arbroath company struggled through its classic repertory of 'Gilderoy' (played on 24th April 1872), 'Luke the Labourer,' and the 'Rose of Ettrick Vale.'

The last-named play brings back with the fragrance of its name a pleasant memory of John Duncan (now Bailie Duncan) as he enacted the part of 'Guy of the Gap,' one which called for ability of a high order and which gave him his greatest opportunities. His repertoire was a varied one, judging from the records.

At this time Thomson—no longer under the restraint of 'Royal' supervision—gave the fullest rein to his vagrant humour, which was often awakened by the grotesque habiliments of his companions on the stage, or their—to him—comic gravity. All alike were mercilessly 'spitted' and pilloried under his satiric references, which occasionally



touched upon the people and shops about Arbroath, the former not always relishing the free advertisement thus obtained.

'Walk upon the *Boulzie Hill* till I return,' and 'Betake thyself to the aristocratic purlieus of *Doig's Vennel*,' were merely allusions to the localities. 'Drown thyself in the Brothock,' was a sly way of emphasising that stream's well-known shallows. 'Doth not the heart pine for an Auchmithie "smokie"?' he queried in a farce where the text read 'Yarmouth bloater.' 'I slept but poorly last night' was the utterance of a melancholy stage character. 'Nor do I wonder at it,' was Thomson's unexpected reply; 'the tanwork is no resting place for sore bones.' An actor with a propensity to a dram had occasion to say 'Your wisdom, my friend, is as weak as——' 'The brandy and water you're so fond of,' broke in Thomson. 'How does our *Brechin* whisky agree with your English stomach?' he was once heard asking 'Owen' in 'Rob Roy.' 'Your head's as big as one of Lucky Bell's cabbages,' he asserted gaily on another occasion, alluding to a famous vegetable emporium not far from the theatre. 'You'll find the bree as guid as "Hashy" Mollison's,' he, as 'Jock Howieson,' nonchalantly assured the King in 'Cramond Brig.' 'Keep your ill gotten gold,' he vociferated with unutterable scorn in a serious play; 'I will rather consult the "three balls" in *James Street*.' 'Rotten ham!' he echoed in an affectation of indignant surprise. 'How can you expect better? It's Irish.' '*M'Hardy's* baps,' he would say with mischievous intent as he airily invited his fellow-players to a banquet in the farce.

## XII.

**Pizarro!**

**T**HERE lies before the writer the veritable bill of 'The Arbroath' announcing their '*second* annual public performance on Wednesday, 15th April 1874, when they will produce (for the first time in Arbroath) the tragedy of

'PIZARRO'; OR, 'THE DEATH OF ROLLA.'

Pizarro, .....	F. T. Mather.
Valverde, .....	John Duncan.
Almagro, } .....	C. Myles.
Davilla, } Captains in the Spanish Army, { .....	A. Peter.
Gomez, } .....	J. Thomson.
Sentinel, .....	Mr Duncan.
Elvira, .....	A young lady.
Atalaba (King of Peru), .....	A. Thomson.
Orazembo, .....	J. Hood Clark.
High Priest, .....	L. Carrie.
Rolla, .....	G. Rutherford Thomson.
Alonzo, .....	J. D. Smith.
Orano, .....	W. Riddle.
Son of Alonzo, ..	Master Duncan.
Cora (wife of Alonzo), .....	A young lady.

'Master' Duncan is the Dr Duncan of our day, his father being prominent in the cast. Although the name of the 'young lady' is not given, the omission can be supplied. Miss Anderson, the 'Helen' of 'Rob Roy,' in a flowing white costume, with strings of pearls about her neck, and a glistening coronet on her brow, still presents herself to vivid recollection. The 'King,' splendidly adorned, was portrayed by Alick Thomson (no relative of 'G. R.');

and the ample figure of J. Hood Clark filled the robes of 'Orazembo.'

What narrator of histrionic glory can do adequate justice to this famous production, its numberless humours, and its never-to-be-forgotten diversions? One episode has

remained for more than three decades indelibly impressed on the local mind. Thomson, as the heroic 'Rolla,' had to pass through a subterranean way to safety: there is the thrilling encounter with the sentry, the countersign is given, and 'all's well,' but the sentinel is still unconvinced and obdurate. 'Fear not!' exclaims the valiant 'Rolla,' with that over-simulated earnestness which no pen can describe; 'Fear not! my friend, it's only—Freddy Mather!' And the house roared as 'Pizarro'—solemn, distraught, laden with the heavy cares and still heavier costume of the title-rôle—stood discomfited and annoyed, the reiterated laughter of the audience completing the full dimension of dramatic perplexity.

## XIII.

### The Last Days of the Gravesend Festivals.

IN announcing an entertainment under the patronage of Provost Muir, to be given on Wednesday, 16th December 1874, 'for the benefit of the aged and necessitous poor' (the play being 'The Lady of Lyons'), the promoters—making excellent capital of a pending litigation over some Lochland Street property—intimated the name of the farce as 'The Perplexed Proprietor of the New Concrete Villa'; but it was only that never-failing spring of pristine humour, 'Turn Him Out.' Let the reader imagine John Duncan in cosier garb as an itinerant vendor of windmills, and C. Y. Myles as a dandy of the first water. The part of 'Beauseant' in the play fell to F. T. Mather, that of 'Glavis' to John Duncan, 'Deschappelles' to young Thomson, and the bluff 'Colonel Damas' to James Clark. A tower of strength was G. R. Thomson in his favourite part of 'Claude'; Bill Lothian appearing in the 'Landlord,' and Charley Myles in the raiments of 'Claude's Mother.'





*Sketch by Louis Carragher*

**THE GRAVESEND HALL, the scene of 'Rob Roy' and 'Pizarro'**

But the best of things must come to an end. No one was more gratified to see the last of the Gravesend performances than the present Bailie Thomson, son of the late G. R. Thomson, upon whom as a young man fell the thankless task of prompter. Its difficulties were not over-rated. The stage often resounded with speeches that were not printed in his playbook, and 'cues' became inextricably confused and lost at a time when it was the vogue to mingle the texts with expressions unrecorded in any vocabulary.

To the participator in those Thespian festivals what delicious memories does the sight of the old hall, derelict and decaying, not help him to recall of heroic endeavour within the compass of a few square feet; of gorgeous raiments drawn from out-of-the-way recesses; of recalcitrant scenery, of harsh objurgations and unintended expletives, red flame, brimstone, blazing jets, and blue fire; ancient swords and blunderbusses, tinsel and twine, paste-board and paint, tow wigs and trailing robes—a terrible conglomerate; of overpowering heats alleviated by spasmodic refreshers between the acts; hungry and thirsty Peruvian warriors devouring 'cap' and porcine dainties hastily brought hither from the 'pie office' in Lindsay Street.

Alas! Dove's Hall knows theatrical life no longer. The stage thunder has been long since stilled, and the scenic glories have departed leaving not a trace behind. More recently it was a hall for the societies, thereafter a practising room for the Rifle Band, and for more than a quarter of a century has been occupied principally as a mission hall.

The 'pie office' (derisively so called because of the word 'office' on the flour-dimmed window pane of the little dark room off the bakery) has long since been given over to less savoury uses, and is a dejected feature of the ancient byway in which its lozenged windows and dilapidated front are still conspicuous.

## XIV.

## Private Theatricals.

IN the first of the seventies the taste for private theatricals began to be cultivated. In this work a spirited interest was taken by Mrs Miller, wife of the esteemed author of 'Arbroath and its Abbey,' who lived in the first house on the western side of Hill Street, entering from High Street. She and her exceptionally talented family were responsible for several charming entertainments. A son of the late G. R. Thomson remembers forming one of a body of juveniles who, in association with the children of David Miller, made 'merry in the hall.'

In a house in James Street long since demolished to make room for the north end of the confectionery works, touching the grounds of the fine old residence of Mr Suttie (the founder of the famous firm of Smith & Suttie), occasions of merriment were sometimes sought by rigging up an old back apartment as a theatre. Cloth scenes, an auditorium composed of chairs, a barrel organ for music, and a few extracts from pieces—performed with delightful disregard of stage completeness, a certain uncertainty as regards scenic detail, and an equal uncertainty as regards light—were the chief features.

By and by the same histrionic spirit became transferred to the large old dwelling-house above Grant's boot shop, near the haunts of the famed Deacon Elshender, Abbey Path. Here within a spacious domestic hall (the house having, it is said, been once a hostelry), with a temporarily fitted up stage, red curtains to draw back, home-made scenery and footlights, bright little pieces were enacted to a select audience. To these came the lady referred to and her vivacious and clever family. On one such occasion—the piece being a little burlesque, 'The Rosebud of Stinging Nettle Farm'—Messrs Christie, of East Abbey Street, noted music-masters of their time, and teachers of many

accomplished musicians, formed, along with a clever pianist, Miss Juno Thomson, the impromptu orchestra. Murphy, the 'Galbraith' of the Gravesend team, and Thomson, of 'Rob Roy' renown, were present on this and other similar occasions, the latter giving his famous recitation, 'The Ruined Cottage.' A capacious deep-seated lobby window formed an admirable 'box'; chairs neatly disposed gave the appearance of 'stalls'; and crowded back to the elevated floor of a kitchen were the equivalents for an admiring 'gallery.' As many as seven of one family took part in these private festivities.

### Boy Histrionics.

Private theatres of a less pretentious description were then greatly in vogue. One rendezvous of the young Thespians was at Hays Lane, in an old-fashioned 'stick-house,' still standing at the head of the lane, close to some old gardens, near to a long-abandoned two-storey workshop. Hays Lane at that time led to a series of delightful gardens, bordered on the north by hedgerows and spacious parks upon which are now the thickly-stacked tenements of Sidney and other streets. The boot factory of Messrs Fairweather rests upon the side of what was then a primitive, 'puddock'-infested brook. No sign of habitation broke the restfulness of the pastoral landscape from Hays-head down to the old wall marking the boundary of the Abbey Green. To the scholars of the old Parochial School (now Abbey Public) that wall was an eternal temptation. Over its broken coping the boys found a favourite but forbidden near cut, with at times portly policemen in full chase. Under its favouring shadows was many a histrionic plot hatched. Here some stage-struck youths, having secured a steel sword and a real Hamletian foil, first practised the art of correct fencing, best described as 'Three up, three down, feint; three up, three down, thrust; three up, three down, parry; rest and begin again.'





Parish Councillor CARRAGHER, who revived  
the St Thomas Dramatic Society in 1881

Duncan's song, 'There's aye a muckle slippy stane at ilka body's door,' caught the fancy of the time; and Veovide peppered the local powers under a clever lyrical composition—'What a blessing!' Florence Montgomery charmed Arbroath youth as 'Boy Blue,' and more than youth chortled gleefully as the characters dived through the face of the old grandfather clock.

The season was not too successful, and there was some confiscating of effects. A handsome Newmarket coat of the latest pattern intended for the principal was left on the hands of a well-known tailor in the High Street, who disposed of it 'for an old song.' For a long time 'Veovide's coat' floated about the High Street on the back of a local celebrity, and received a large share of that derisive notoriety in which young Arbroath is ever so generous.

## XV.

'St Thomas' Rises from  
the Ashes.

THE St Thomas Company—whose stock, wigs, accoutrements, and wardrobe had perished so disastrously in the great fire in the Tanwork—was resuscitated largely through the efforts of James E. Carragher. It was by no means so circumscribed as its earlier namesake. It was formed on 7th November 1881 as an independent concern under the patronage of the leaders in municipal and commercial life. Its roll-call of twenty-eight honorary members contains the names of many influential public men. The comedy element fell to the shoulders of John Quinn. 'Ireland' was chosen for study, and John Street Hall became the headquarters. The new company's first performance, with 'real snowstorm effects,' was given on 20th December 1881, John Quinn, as 'Ragged Pat,' introducing one out of his repertory of songs of his own

authorship and composition. 'Judy O'Trot' and other female parts were undertaken by youths. The success was instantaneous. Price had whetted the local appetite for the Milesian element, and the public rose to the occasion. A book might be filled with the incidents of that occasion. The 'snow-box,' an overhead trough filled with small papers shaken through a mesh, refused to operate, and the 'heavy flakes of snow' declined to descend upon the pity-inspiring evicted.

At an impromptu banquet at the close of the proceedings, G. R. Thomson, in congratulating the performers, gave an interesting retrospect of things dramatic for nearly thirty years, detailing many of his own early Thespian experiences.

On 25th January 1882 the St Thomas transferred 'Ireland' to Dundee for an evening; and thereafter was undertaken the production of 'Pike O'Callaghan,' in the Trades Hall, on 8th March 1882, with some excellent 'transpontine' effects. The bridge over the mountain gullies of Wicklow was made up of a *form*, the ends resting loosely upon uncertain supports. No one in the audience knew how near to being hurled into the apparent ravine below was every figure that crossed it. A lady very nearly wrecked the play by retiring (against orders) to dress elaborately for the final act. The hero was to die, and 'Lady Broughton' was to bring the handy 'pardon.' 'Lead him forth,' cried the villain; 'Lead him forth!' he repeated, but she came not. The manager was at white-heat with rage. The poor hero was struggling away to gag up the time with old speeches. To all entreaties 'Lady Broughton' kept on coolly titivating. She would come when she was ready; and it was only when the tension had been broken and sustained for half-a-dozen times that she burst through the door. And then—after all, the 'pardon' was wanting!

Changes and the fortunes of industry in Arbroath played havoc with the composition of that newer St Thomas, which with the departure of many of its leading spirits gradually melted away.

## XVI.

## The Royal Abbey Lodge of Oddfellows' Dramatic Society.

WHEN the Gravesend Club had become a thing of the past some part of the enthusiasm which had permeated it remained, several of its more active spirits becoming merged in the Royal Abbey Lodge of Oddfellows' Dramatic Society—a recreative offshoot of that Ancient Order which makes its presence felt at least one night every winter by a torchlight procession through the streets to the beating of drums and indescribable tooting on quaint instruments, the fantastic figures (amongst whom 'Auld Clottie' is ever foremost) pursuing their weird and antiquated rites within the shadow of the Abbey ruins and stalking solemnly round the Pint Stoup! The late Harry Bryan, always a familiar figure in the Society's perambulations, with his cavalier costume and fine horse, was an equally conspicuous figure in the company. It was said with some slyness that the Lodge plays were not infrequently chosen to give Harry's *costume* a distinguishing opportunity.

This company produced (in what sequence hardly matters) 'St Mary's Eve,' 'The Octoroon,' 'Colleen Bawn,' 'Time and the Hour,' 'Ticket of Leave Man,' and 'British Born.'

### Under the 'Red Light.'

Blood and thunder, knives, cutlasses—ay, and ship-deck scenes with an occasional 'raking-piece loaded to the muzzle'—figured largely in the productions. Nothing was dearer to the heart of the young Red Lichties than 'a fight to the finish,' or a finale where, amidst din and smoke and

red light, the hero would wrap the British flag around him and command the baffled villains to fire upon that invulnerable shield. The innocent and unconscious burlesque of it all reminded one of the bad baronet's saying in 'Ruddigore': 'Foiled! and by a Union Jack! S'death we are undone!'

Several clever ladies at this time stand out clearly,—one, Miss Smith, who gave some tragic vehemence to her work, and Miss L. Riddle (afterwards Mrs Wilkie), whose activity in comedy was thoroughly popular, and who was an ideal Mattie in 'Rob Roy.'

Between the acts 'Bobbie Tosh' danced the sword dance and shean trews, creating a yell of pleasure from the gallery at every varied 'loup.'

Many features of those productions create laughter on recollection. There is the incident of the breaking down of the rope bridge in the water scene in the 'Colleen Bawn,' the Irish hero disappearing in the scenic current and the rocks making an unrehearsed clatter upon the stage. The audience grinned at the lingering relish and emphasis with which a favourite villain exhorted his *two* soldiers to 'scatter' themselves 'through the wood.'

During a pathetic scene a dying man's spasmodic utterances were unexpectedly punctuated in a manner which made this miscreant amateur's mouth fill with curses. 'What noise is that?' he asked, with the conventional delirium in his looks and the traditional glaring bloodshot expression in his eyes. Swiftly through the 'wings' in the solemn silence came the answer, 'Clink! clink! clink!' A basket of bottles had toppled over, and the contents were falling down stairs. 'Curse them!' the dying villain hissed with a more than histrionic vehemence, which awakened a ring of laughter-shrieks.

## XVII.

*A New Dramatic Era.*

IT is a pathetic recollection that within a fortnight of the production of 'British Born' the promising young histriion, Alec Thomson, was in his grave, the result of overwork and chill brought on in his efforts to provide sensation for Arbroath. But Arbroath took the matter as it ought. A benefit was immediately organised for his widow, and thereby was opened a new era in the town's dramatic life. Not since the days of the old Gravesenders had there been such eager interest as when 'Rob Roy,' with a special fit-up, was presented on 10th May 1882, with G. R. Thomson in his old part of 'Rob,' Clark returning, after a long retirement, to play the 'Bailie.' The Public Hall was packed to the door, and hundreds were turned away disappointed. Miss Addison, resplendent in costumes of much elegance, with a silken sash of Rob Roy tartan, produced a favourable impression as 'Diana.' The head of the bill ran like this :—

G. R. THOMSON in ..... ROB ROY.

J. H. CLARK in his original character, ..... THE BAILIE.  
AND

C. Y. MYLES as ..... THE DUGAL CREATUR.

The rest of the cast included :

Sir Frederick Vernon, ..... J. M. B. Michie.  
Rashleigh Osbaldistone, ..... James Watson.  
Francis Osbaldistone, ..... W. Lothian.  
Mr Owen, ..... W. Barclay.  
Captain Thornton, ..... Peter Butchart.

The three starred veterans worked like Trojans.

Flushed with the appreciation of a crowded house, Thomson played with realistic force—too realistic it is feared for his captors in the Aberfoyle scene, who received

some sore bones before they got 'Maegregor' bound, one of the supers remarking confidently to another as he rubbed his wounds, 'Rob's lookin' richt angry-like the nicht!'

The public demanded a second performance, which was given a night or two later, and a splendid sum in name of proceeds was handed over to the widow.

There was one other great night in the New Public Hall, the production of 'Guy Mannering' as the companion play to 'Rob Roy.' The title-rôle fell to the late Henry Bryan, who had come rapidly forward in the Abbey Lodge team by his 'Hawkshaw' in 'The Ticket of Leave Man,' a part of which he was very proud, and of which there linger one or two funny episodes. James Watson had a heavy task in rendering the eccentricities of 'Dominie Sampson' amusing; and a quaint choice on the part of the late G. R. Thomson led him to assume the wild tragedy of 'Meg Merrilees'! In the uncouth garb of the wandering gipsy, his head adorned with a trailing wig, and a gnarled staff in his hand, Thomson gave the mysterious character of Scott's novel a new and awesome and certainly unique presentation. Will Lothian's 'Bertram' was a fine performance; so was Barclay's 'Dirk Hatterick'; and a distinct score was made by Charles Myles as 'Dandie Dinmont,' especially in the encounter with the gipsies, where he sang and danced amidst uproarious applause and laughter in the shadows of the well-arranged stage twilight and the fires of the gipsy encampment.

### 'Our Boys' Society.

The name of George Strachan, a merchant in Arbroath in the seventies, has been already mentioned in connection with the formation of the Arbroath Dramatic Company. Death all too early ended his dramatic career, but the theatrical traditions of the name were perpetuated in his family. The late Edward Strachan was a prominent member of a Dundee dramatic society when the now famous William Mollison, of 'Bailie' fame, was also an

amateur in Juteopolis. Strachan took the leading comedy parts in 'Blow for Blow,' 'Weak Woman,' and other plays. Largely owing to his initiative the 'Our Boys' Company was formed, somewhere about the year 1882, for the purpose of providing the element of light comedy for Arbroath.

With their minds still hankering after the melodramatic the Arbroath people, so far as the results manifested, did not second the efforts so heartily as the enthusiasm of the company warranted. Others in that company were Mr Kermath, who was 'walking gentleman'; James Davidson, who ably undertook the staid, elderly parts; and Henry Clark, a son of the late James H. Clark, who, inheriting something of the dramatic talent of the accredited local 'Bailie,' played with considerable gentlemanly reserve and refinement. Miss Annie Strachan, now Mrs Irvine Brown, who was and is an elocutionist of exceptional ability, played such parts as 'Violet Melrose' in 'Our Boys' and the dual rôle of the sisters in 'Blow for Blow.' The Trades Hall was the scene of the operations of 'Our Boys.'

### Brisk Dramatic Competition.

Arbroath had at this period a very busy time responding to histrionic solicitations:

And societies cropped up like hay,  
The young John Hares, and such as they,  
Grew like asparagus in May;  
In point of fact too many.

For there were then no less than four companies, the result—as one of the survivors of that period of dramatic rivalry tells us—'of endeavouring to conciliate the discontented Henry Irvings.' In this well-merited endeavour perhaps one of the most successful was Will Davidson who, with a team which included Will Barclay, the late Ned Murray, James M. B. Michie, and others, produced 'Won at Last,' 'Money,' and the 'Factory Girl,'—a fair trial of managerial



strength. Nor was dramatic management 'all lavender,' as the saying goes. Sometimes the pursestrings of the public were pulled too much, and financial disaster resulted. Then would come 'a frost—a killing frost.' For example, the Oddfellows played 'The Ticket-of-Leave Man,' on 9th April 1884, to a full house. Exactly a fortnight later John Quinn with an able company played 'Dan'l Druce' to a 'house which answered with a hollow sound.' The net profits of that production, a member of the Mark Tapleian order recalls, were—eighteenpence!

Besides what was styled 'The Arbroath,' two Irish teams, both claiming to be *the* St Thomas, were also in the field, both offering the same play as a singularly generous but truly Hibernian opportunity for contrast of merit! It was on one of these occasions that the 'snow box' (an overhead trough filled with cut papers and wrought by strings) having failed to work, an Irish youth climbed the stage 'rigging,' and rained down 'snow' with his hands.

Circumstances had made it necessary to change the theatrical quarters from Commerce Street (the old Horner's Wynd) to John Street.

### **Last of the Trades Hall as a Theatre.**

It is now nearly a quarter of a century since the Trades Hall ceased to be a theatre. Its grand old stage was then overwhelmed by the Salvation Army, and the entire proscenium, scenery, bridges, skycovers, side-wings, iron 'dogs' and all, bundled into a corner ready for the scrap heap. The dismantled stage gave place to the shouts of ardent Army leaders, some of the most notorious of Arbroath's 'characters'—male as well as female—taking their seats on the 'stool of repentance,' and shouting the testimony of their lives to the walls which only a few weeks before reverberated with the sounds of Thespian glory.

## XVIII.

## 'The Shaughraun' in 'Shastres.'

ONE grey morning at the commencement of the winter of 1882 there came into the hands of a friend of the writer two slim manuscript volumes packed full, even to the covers, with jagged barbed-wire like handwriting. It was evident that the 'books' had been newly written, for the ink upon them was scarcely yet dry; and they manifested the 'galloping' method adopted by those who have never known leisure all their days. This embodiment of what at first looked like Assyrian text—inextricable, apparently, as the hieroglyphics of Memphis or the Shastres of Brahma—was the manuscript of 'The Shaughraun.' The name of no play is more familiar to the lips nowadays than that of this evergreen favourite in every part of the world. But at that time when the play was just a few years old it existed only in a written form, and heavy royalties and the terrors of civil action hung over it. The famous case of *Boucicault v. Chatterton* had destroyed all hopes of piracy, and so delightful a fruit of the dramatic orchard seemed to private effort far away and unattainable. To the receivers of this unexpected literary treasure the law's strong hand contained no terrors.

The curious MS. represented the remarkable production of a professional lady, who, in her nightly association with the play in the part of Claire Ffolliot, had so memorised the whole drama that she wrote it entirely without copy, detailing scenery, direction, words, everything from beginning to end. When, long afterwards, the copyright had expired and prints in thousands were dispersed, a close comparison with the original proved that she had not made a single mistake! Of course the work was substantially rewarded. Within forty-eight hours after its acquisition a complete copy was being taken down in parts. A team was

quickly drawn together, and the parts allotted. This represented the birth of the Arbroath Shaughraun Company. So great a prize was the possession of the play that many ladies and gentlemen offered their services for no other purpose, it is believed, than to secure the parts and fit them together. But if such was their intention they were very quickly undeceived. The 'book' was kept in the hands of the stage manager, and the performers received only a few written slips. All the rest was mystery. The team with the disintegrated drama quietly rehearsed in various back rooms and places, while the method of realisation was being carefully thought out.

### **The Capture of a 'Conn.'**

Nothing can remain a secret; and whilst the play was being rehearsed without a 'Conn,' without a 'Claire' and some other leading characters, speculation was actively engaged in as to how—upon such limited ground of practice as Orrock's Refreshment Room, the Star Hotel, the Abbey Inn, with not even a chalked floor for guidance—so great a task was to be encountered. The Oddfellows' Dramatic Society were taking a lively interest in the forthcoming production, and mysterious whispers arose as to who was to essay the difficult rôle of the 'Shaughraun' himself. The querulous were soon answered, for the new company boldly negotiated with one of the competing company—perhaps the best comedian for such a part of that or any other amateur period—Mr Charles Y. Myies. Loyalty to his own ranks had been his first generous consideration, but obedience to an old friendship compelled him, not without misgivings, to accept the invitation. He threw himself into the allotted task with new energy, and his Irish friends had never any reason to regret their selection. His 'signing-on' was a veritable capture. His engagement was a great surprise. It was the talk of the town's taprooms, the source of lively comment wherever interested local tragedians were wont to congregate.

Another speculation was afoot. Adopting all the





*Photo by James Milne, St Ruth's*

Charles Y. Myles

IN HIS ORIGINAL CHARACTER EXPOSITION OF  
'THE SHAUGHRAUN'  
AS HE APPEARED IN 1883

methods of the profession, the 'Shaughrauns' put out gigantic posters, 'starred' their proud capture in letters three feet long, and announced 'a great new revolving jail scene for the Fenian's escape.' No one knew how many hours of thinking it cost to bring this then remarkable piece of mechanism to completion. After vain negotiations to procure a new fit-up in the Public Hall, which was to be lent only on terms which nothing but a plutocratic club could be expected to agree to, the 'Shaughrauns' were obliged to confine their ambitions to the cribbed and cabined limits of John Street.

### **The Revolving Jail Scene.**

Down came the mechanical effects (which were not so very mechanical when you knew how to do it) to fit the dismayed circumstances, and, considering the drawbacks, the venture, which came off on 7th February 1883, succeeded far beyond expectation. John Street saw on that occasion its most packed house. The 'sixpenny' order was suspended to limit discomfort as was thought, but it only created a greater overflow of 'bobs.' The 'escape' came off with wonderful smoothness, and when the jail seemed to revolve in the darkness the applause was simply thunderous, a loud exclamation of 'Bravo!' being enthusiastically vented by the veteran, G. R. Thomson, who—with his eyes keenly penetrating the stage in the gas-engineered dimness—had secured a place in front of the boxes. The bold innovation for Arbroath had triumphed. The 'something new' has become old and stage-worn; the 'revolvable' flats have long since gone under; but the idea helped to open a new chapter in spectacular effect in the work of the Arbroath drama.

Willie Boath, who, as Robert the Fenian, escaped through the window, is now in America. The boy Dobson, whose love of military life led him to accept the part of 'Sergeant,' fell a prey to the fevers of the Soudan soon after. Two others have passed out of the land of the living, and one only of that happy band of '83 retains an

active association with the stage. This is Charles Myles, whose 'Shaughraun' not only proved to be a dramatic treat, but made a picturesque addition to his long and apparently inexhaustible list of rôles.

### 'Harvey Duff's' Distinguished Dive.

Justice to the dead demands a special reference to the late Jack Boath. He had never seen the play, yet was called on to assume the character of the repulsive villain's 'tool.' Smiling at the very suggestion when first mooted, he threw himself into an instantaneously conceived pose. He was 'Harvey Duff' from that moment; and eventually the gods roared with real enjoyment when, aided by a long athletic practice, he made his 'header' over the cliff—a clean, clever dive through space—an act of stage craft not usually witnessed in the course of a play. What amused his confrères was the pains he took to perfect the act. Long before the necessary time he laid down a large mattress to deaden the fall, which, covering the hinged trap that led to the regions below, kept everybody hatched down until it was all over. The following was the bill of the

#### SHAUGHRAUN.

Father Doolan,.....	W. Allardice Forbes.
Harvey Duff,.....	J. B. Ewan (J. Boath).
Kinchela, .....	F. Thomas (Carragher).
Conn, .....	Charles Y. Myles.
Robert Ffolliot,.....	William Boath.
Sullivan, .....	J. Hamilton.
Doyle, .....	J. Mackay.
Sergeant, .....	George Dobson.
Mrs O'Kelly, .....	John Carragher.
Moya Doolan, .....	Master Edwin Bernard.
Claire Ffolliot, .....	Miss Agnes Watson.
Arte O'Neale,.....	Miss Caroline Chalmers.
Bridget Madigan, .....	Miss Taylor.

The writer was cast for Captain Molyneux. The gentleman who played the clergyman wore a complete set of priest's clothes, white stock and all, borrowed from the Chapel-

house. With such a heavy setting there was no room for all to dress, and the chief characters appeared at the hall fully costumed. The ladies dressed in the hallkeeper's house below. How they made their way through the dense crowd which thronged the doorway is a wonder. Quick changes in general had to be made amidst shuffling 'flats' and sliding 'wings,' the dismaying crash of erratic scenery, the discordant din of voices, and the shrill chirp of the scene-shifter's whistle.

### A Man who grew famous.

A repetition of the play was clamoured for and given on 4th April 1883, and 'The Shaughraun' was not seen in Arbroath again until the arrival of a company which, displaced by ill-luck from the larger circuit, contained many gifted ladies and gentlemen. A special production, covering several nights (commencing 26th March 1884), was given, three prominent members of the local company of that name, including the late Jack Boath, being chosen to assist. Starred inch deep on the bills, they assisted materially to draw big houses. Mrs Monte, once famous to stageland as Annie Gill, made on that occasion so decided an impression that at the close of the spirited light comedy act, where the Captain tranquillises the young Irish lady's national antipathies by an instantaneous embrace, the audience insisted on two distinct repetitions, the drop-cloth rising twice amidst cheers—a unique compliment during the course of an act upon which the curtain has not finally fallen.

As instancing the quality of the company, it may be added that the actor who played the part of Conn has been carried on the wings of success. He went to America with the Kendals, made a splendid name as Simonides in 'Ben Hur' at Drury Lane, and is at present one of the most talked of men in stage circles in New York. His name is John E. Dodson.

Within the portals of the cosy little place of refreshment at the top of the High Road Bridge, over a quiet glass



Dodson at that time told his recollections of the great Boucicault and the first production of 'The Shaughraun' in Dublin. When at the very start of the play the captain's red coat appeared to the vision of the inflammable Irish they refused to allow him to proceed. He was a rebel hunter, and they hissed scaringly. Suddenly the hisses changed to wild cheering. The amnestied Fenian prisoners were entering the box. The captain joined in the spontaneous outburst of 'God Save Ireland,' and the play was permitted to proceed.

## XIX.

### John Street Hall and its Memories.

**D**EJECTED, venerable, sullen, this ancient edifice—'the cave of magic delight' in times that are gone (a world of local history wrapped within its earlier name, the Chartists' Hall)—stands in the by-street, last but one, branching from the thoroughfare within sound of the howling sea, in the very heart of Fairport's fisherland.

No more the clang of armour sounds,  
Nor novice histrion fails;  
No more 'Macgregor' boldy bounds  
And 'Rashleigh's' life assails.

Mr D. S. Salmond in his 'Reminiscences' describes the place in the days when the celebrated Arbroathian, Dr Joseph Anderson of the Antiquarian Museum, Edinburgh, was a pupil teacher there. It was 'like a church with a gallery at either end.' 'Like a church' it began; 'like a church' it ended, for it never rose to the full dignity. Dr Anderson informs the writer that about 1850, and for some three years after, John Street Hall was used by the English Department of the Educational Institution as a class-room previous to the removal of the Rector's and English





*Sketch by Louis Carragher*

**JOHN STREET HALL, where Harry Lauder sang his first song**

Departments to the new building near the Abbey Green. Long years ago it was the nursery of local temperance. It saw the birth of the Evangelical Union in Arbroath and the genesis of the Salvation Army.

### A Theatrical Crebus.

It was when it came to be the headquarters of the local Oddfellows Order that it took the appearance of a theatre: curious boxes and a gallery were there; the dressing-rooms, a primitive rat-ridden space of cellar-like proportions, with a seamy partition dividing the sexes. In these the performers, unable to stand upright, had to 'make up' in a semi-recumbent attitude. What with the paint and the badly fitting costumes and a sense of lumbago, one was glad to get to the upper air.

Miserable, cramped, inadequate the place was, but affectionate interest blinded us to its defects. A candle stuck in its own tallow within a crevice offered the only illumination, and cast strange and grotesque shadows as the painted mummers rolled themselves into cloaks or pulled themselves into top-boots, crawling almost on hands and knees to the wooden steps that led to the stage. But it was all very wonderful, and the hall served well its day and generation. The public had their sufferings also. They took complacently their unsought Turkish bath in the balcony, and a perspiring 'select' crowd held the boxes beneath.

The scenic equipment was good. There was an old 'practicable door' covered with 'ivy,' which, with the canvas hanging raggedly from its porch, served alike for the cottages of the poor and the palaces of the king; a cloth parlour all orange, with a painted picture on the 'wall'; a threadbare 'front landscape'; and rolls of indescribable canvas up aloft; a neat little prompter's desk and bell; and a table which, covered with a cloth, would serve for the banquet in 'Macbeth,' or, with the cloth off, for the bare room of the heroine who 'had not had one crust of bread to eat since yesterday.'

D

### The Fishers try to interdict 'Rob Roy.'

Consecrated for many years to dramatic art, John Street Hall served for three or four clubs and several professional companies. But its days were numbered. One event of its declining moments as a theatre is particularly memorable. The fisher folks had endeavoured to involve the Oddfellows Company in litigation, alleging that the tumult of play-acting overhead had become insufferable, and craving for interdict on the ground that they had to go out early in the morning and could not get their natural rest. Those were the old days of having to go to Forfar to the Sheriff for the necessary 'deliverance,' popularly understood as a summons of interdict, which by singular fitness came to be served dramatically during a performance of 'Rob Roy.' The play had commenced, and had reached the exciting meeting at Glasgow Bridge, when a commotion behind the scenes became manifest to Rob and the two Osbaldistones on the stage. The summons, or whatever else it was, was being served. Rashleigh, venturing near the wings, learned the cause of commotion, and waited only the appropriate moment to employ the language of the play to good effect. Where he says, 'I will lure Macgregor to the toils,'—'The warrants are out!' he exclaimed with unwonted emphasis. The idea quickly communicated itself to the listener. 'The warrants!' cried Rob (G. R. Thomson), his strongly-lined countenance gleaming with indignation, 'They have been the curse of puir auld Scotland!' and his whole frame vibrated as he pointed downwards to the source from which destiny had apparently come, the sympathy of the house expressing itself in a tumultuous roar.

But destiny had come in real earnest, and John Street Hall as a playhouse was doomed—not on account of the fishers, but of the Salvation Army, who conquered the citadel, making it their home until the beginning of 1886, when it was formally opened by the late Professor Christie of Aberdeen as a place of sanctity—St Ninian's Chapel.

## XX.

The Last Dramatic Days  
of G. R. Thomson.

**A**MONGST the last important efforts of G. R. Thomson was his return to the Public Hall in his old and favourite part of Claude Melnotte in 'The Lady of Lyons.' Not since the days of Gravesend had Arbroath given him such a reception. He had a splendid greeting for 'auld lang syne.' Everything went well until the scene where, clad in the gorgeous apparel of the fictitious Prince of Como, he whispers his soft love-crooning into the ear of the gentle Pauline. You could have heard a pin drop. Melnotte had just reached the words which run something like 'where the doves flutter and the nightingale sings,' when—was it a coincidence?—a pair of lovely tumbler pigeons floated over the great space of the Public Hall between the balcony and the stage. What means this cheering? One of the pigeons is tumbling in the air; the other is making straight for the stage, where, attracted by the footlights, it lands almost at the feet of Claude and Pauline. The great audience, following the flight of the birds with animated interest, and forgetting play and players, give vent to homely expressions of admiration of these lovely 'tumblers.' The dialogue ceases. Where all should be as still as the grave a commotion arises in the balcony. It is the owner of the doves in violent colloquy with the attendants, who half throttled the youth for the indiscretion of allowing his pets to fly away. But how about the coincidence—the love speech and the suitable instant? To this hour the story of 'the doos' is a strange one. At all events the finest effect in the play was marred; and at the moment those most concerned would have liked devoutly to have wrung the necks of the

'tumblers,' or, what is more, performed the same operation on their own. The same evening Miss Strachan, who had taken the leading part in the play, made an effective appearance in 'The Bonnie Fishwife.' The bill was as follows:—'The Royal Abbey Lodge beg respectfully to announce on 16th May 1883 the production of Lord Bulwer Lytton's Admired and Fashionable Play in Five Acts, entitled

**"THE LADY OF LYONS."**

Beauseant, .....	James Watson.
Glavia, .....	Charles Myles.
Colonel Damas, .....	James Hood Clark.
Deschappelles, .....	James M'Leish.
Landlord, .....	Alexander Taylor.
Gaspard, .....	H. Ingram Bryan.
Major Francois, .....	Soutar Murray.
Dupont, .....	T. Alexander.
Captain Laundry, .....	Frederick Lowe.
CLAUDE MELNOTTE, .....	G. RUTHERFORD THOMSON.
Madame Deschappelles, }	Lady Amateurs.
Pauline Deschappelles, }	
Widow Melnotte, .....	Isaac Duthie.

The entertainment is announced to conclude with

**'THE BONNIE FISHWIFE.'**

*Characters :*

Sir Hickory, .....	James Watson.
Wildoats, .....	H. Ingram Bryan.
Gaiters (a valet), .....	Charles Myles.
Miss Thistledown, }	By a Lady Amateur.
Maggie M'Farlane, }	

On the occasion the Arbroath Amateur Orchestral Society performed the whole music as at the 'recent reproduction of the play at the 'Grand Theatre, Leeds.'

### **His fraternal feeling for fellow-actors.**

Thomson looked forward with great enthusiasm to this revival. Writing three days before the play what proved to be the last letter to his namesake at Callander, William Thomson, the 'Bailie Nicol Jarvie' of earlier days, he said: 'After the term is over and the theatre shut I go to London for two or three weeks.' He adds laconically but significantly, '*Great many tickets sold.*' The expectation was realised, a crowded house and big returns made amends for much worry and business concern.

There is some questioning amongst admirers as to whether this proved to be Thomson's last grand triumph. But for the untoward interruption there is every reason to believe it was. A personal diary of dramatic events faithfully preserved takes little notice of his subsequent dramatic operations. The writer's last recollection of the veteran is there chronicled with special reference to a banquet in the George Hotel on the occasion of a local brother actor's departure. Thomson had been in rather poor health, but, wrapped in his familiar wide-lapelled overcoat, he had come at much personal inconvenience to maintain his unbroken principle of charity to his fellow-players. The room was cold and cheerless, but he was humorous and reminiscent as ever. He caused no small sensation at one part of the proceedings by enquiring with purposeful abruptness and in a stern tone of voice, 'Who let off the doos?' Not a sound broke the silence that followed.

Thomson's death, occurring with startling suddenness in the early morning of 3rd January 1885, removed from the arena of local dramatic art one of its most valued exponents, certainly its most distinguished figure, and the captain of its venturesome band of pioneers. Many an episode, gay and otherwise, was recalled, many a side-splitting *bon mot* of glorious nights, regarnished with mingled pathos and humour. The old days of Gravesend were recast again and again in the everlasting mould of fond remembrance.



Thomson's heart and soul were in the cause with which he had so inseparable an identity; and behind it all—behind the mask of fierce acting fervour, severe stage discipline, and unrelenting insistence upon old-fashioned traditions, there beat a kindly heart, one which was oftener stirred to generosity than his nearest friends may have realised. To those who were associated with him in things theatrical there survive a certain thrill of pride and a world of kindly recollection. His deep interest and enthusiasm were magnetic before or behind the scenes; and his strong dramatic personality had a greater influence than anything else could possibly have had in stirring to its depths that strange under-current of aspiration which is the breath of all theatrical life.

To wake the soul by gentle strokes of art;  
To raise the genius, and to mend the heart.

## XXI.

### The 'Peter Pan' of Arbroath Drama:

'Hughie' Smith.

SOMETHING more than a passing reference is due to the booth theatres, which, with all deference to the airy superciliousness of to-day, were thirty or forty years ago responsible for keeping warm the dramatic temperament and imaginative instincts of the people. They sent child and senator, maid and matron, home radiant, and dispensed happiness at a moderate price.

'Hughie' Smith was the 'Peter Pan' of our youthful day-dreams, just probably as Giles of the Abbey Green had been before him. By his jaunty manner, the boom of his big drum, the magnetic influence of his laughing eyes, and particularly his ever-smiling lips as they glided over the reeds of the whistle safely adjusted within his showman's scarf; and above all by his big box of ever-changing

treasures, we were spirited on airy wings away from the prosaic world of childhood, out beyond the sorrowful vale of pothooks, capes, and beheaded royalties, to a more entrancing realm. We touched kingdoms wherein were floating columbines and shrieking clowns, flashing daggers, loaded pistols, pirate kings, and highwayman Jacks—a sort of showman's 'Never, Never Land.' By day his old 'soap box on wheels' trundled through the streets bearing in great, thick, black letters the announcement of the night's performance, a stoppage being made at each conspicuous corner to give voice to the purposes so artistically foreshadowed on the primitive waggon.

### A Youngster's Elysium.

At night, under the light of blazing lamps, the actors lined up on the front platform arrayed in all their glory. Young 'Hughie' relieved his parent at the drum, the while his sister—the oppressed heroine of a hundred plays—resplendent in spangles which glittered under the flares like a princess's jewels, danced divinely and sang what sounded in our ears like the syrens' seductive song, 'My charming blue-eyed Nelly!' Continuous were the changes and lightsome the variations, as to the dreamy melody of a wheezy fiddle the soul was transported by 'Belphegor,' 'Leah,' 'The Dropping Well,' 'Macbeth,' 'The Murder at the Red Barn' (always appropriately posteried in red paint), and 'Rob Roy!' Then when winter gave its white mantle to the old ruins and snow lay thick on the Abbey Green or winds moaned through the dreary shadows of the Chapter-house, young 'Red Lights' crowded in to the 'Brownie of the Round O!' or 'The Ghost of Magungie Woods'; whilst those less fortunate peered anxiously from the outside through the yawning boards of the slim structure to gain a glimpse of Elysium!

### Even a Gravedigger Laughed.

'Hughie's' pantomime created much stir in the Fore and Back Abbey Streets and in the purlieus of Barber's Croft. Joy upon joy rained upon the youngsters as they stepped gaily across the front platform to receive each an orange at ingoing. A clown with a red poker appeared in front to captivate the masses, and old MacIennan came out of the cottage at the Abbey Green to hold his sides and laugh. He was the Abbey gravedigger, and he laughed hugely. But even a sexton may laugh. Heigho! this blazing world of fooling and of infinite jest made even a gravedigger happy! Long ago the house of the sexton has vanished and with it the delver of resting-places.

A famous fishcadger was taken in to play a part in the pantomime and made a droll and side-splitting 'bobby.' During the piece the urchins roared over this dainty couplet of the widow's:

Aha! my lad,  
Ye needna blaw;  
I ken ye by yer feet—  
You're plain Jock Law.

## XXII.

### Duckenfield.

LATER came Duckenfield who, as far back as the sixties, had kept alive the love of 'the legitimate,' and the region of whose work was not always confined to the booth. One of the finest comedians of his generation was in his employment. We refer to Duncan, the father of the clever family of professionals of that name who at a later time appeared in 'villain' parts in the Trades Hall.

Most people have forgotten that 'Duckie,' as he was affectionately styled, came from Perth to Arbroath and Dundee at an early date as a 'star' along with Charles Dillon, Miss Duckenfield (Ida Rosalind), and that other Arbroath favourite, Forrest Knowles, who in his advanced years painted the proscenium for the first fit-up in the New Public Hall, bearing pictures of the Abbey, views of the cliffs, and such like.

Latterly Duckenfield drew large audiences to the great booth in Reform Street ('The Brickie'), which he opened on 24th March 1884 with the 'Bohemian Girl,' thereafter giving magnificent displays, and occasionally a pantomime or burlesque from the facile pen of one of his own staff.

How prophetically this playwright could touch upon topics of the town is shown in such lyrical satire as this (sung in front of a fine cloth reproduction of the Town House):—

In the 'Monkey' House the Fox now takes his nightly 'dossing';  
While all his wily snares are set to barter Spink Street Crossing.  
And many municipal schemes cause daily perturbation;  
The Water Scare, the Common Good, the electric-lit New Station.

And this nearly a quarter of a century ago! Duckenfield brought the famous Henry Talbot for a season, commencing on 20th May 1884 with 'Macbeth.' The names of old Morton, Redmond, Frank Halliday, and Ashmall (a son-in-law of Duckenfield's), are written luridly in the memory of the Red Lichtie.

Duckenfield's 'Rob Roy,' on 27th June 1884, was a novelty in cast. Young Morton took the title rôle, his mother playing Helen; Ida Rosalind appearing as Francis, and Howard Campbell as the Bailie.

During the run of the pantomime Kate Duckenfield played 'Aladdin,' supported by a number of 'Arbroath's Bonnie Lassies,' who sang, in front of a beautiful scene of the Town House, a song with a turn like this:

If dull celibacy scorning  
You would seek a happy life,

Then just take our little warning  
And avoid a wealthy wife.

You may take a gentle partner,  
Like your 'Soshies,'—with a *check* [cheque],  
But she'll prove a quick disheartener,  
And a mill-stone round your neck.

### Duckenfield's Death.

The closing of 'Duckie's'—(with its red fire and blue flares, its long yielding wooden seats over which, into space, one's limbs hung perilously)—must have cost young Arbroath many a pang. He went away Fifewards, and lived until a year or two ago, long enough to take farewell of the stage in the part of Bailie Nicol Jarvie, dying at a very advanced age. A gentleman at Burnbank, Cardenden, writing to the 'Arbroath Guide,' said :—'I may say I saw the last of him. A company came to Cardenden, Fife, under the management of one of the name of Rich, and old Duckie and his daughter were in the company. They erected a wooden shed, and drew good houses every night. They were all good actors, and seemed to have seen better days. The last time I gave the booth a visit the piece was "Rob Roy," and poor Duckie was the Bailie. I felt to see the poor old man of eighty-seven years—how well he did his part! I don't think he was able to be on the boards again. He took ill some time after, and was only confined to the house one week when he died. That was about 1904. The company gave him a very respectable funeral. The Roman Catholic clergyman took his remains to Kinglassie, and buried him in some ground of their own. That was the end of Duckenfield, and I may say it was the end of the theatre, for shortly afterwards a terrible night of wind blew it down, and it was not erected again. Some time after Duckie's death they circulated leaflets with his

portrait, the lines thereon being composed by himself. They are as follows :—

' With artistes many, now no more, we gained your smiles for years,  
But now I wander all alone through this weary vale of tears ;  
For now, alas ! my glass is run : I've grown quite grey and old ;  
Death will claim me very soon, and lay me in the mould.  
Although grown weak in many ways, I still am stout at heart,  
And who knows but in another sphere I may play a leading part ;  
But till that time approaches, and I this life must yield,  
I hope to remain, your humble friend,

GEORGE DUCKENFIELD.'

### XXIII.

#### The Abbey Inn Theatre—

#### An Eveless Eden.

**A**FTER a lull in things theatric, the Abbey Inn, which in the times of Mr Whyte (who died only the other day) had been a happy rehearsing ground, became about 1885 a centre of dramatic production. There are perhaps earlier dramatic associations, but these are not easy to gather. Many years ago, when Mackie had his livery stables there, there was an agile son of his who vaulted on and off big brakes and did marvellous and dexterous feats of horsemanship. Every winter he disappeared, and it transpired long after that he had gone to take up his duty as a harlequin. But that vocation, like 'Othello's occupation,' went, and Harry the harlequin came back never to leave his four-in-hand again.

When the Abbey Inn became a theatre, every Wednesday a new piece was produced from such a repertoire as 'The Peep Show Man,' 'Last Life,' 'Staff of Diamonds,' 'Bird in the Hand,' and 'My Partner,' by a company (including a hairdresser named Graham, well known for his female impersonations), the members of which were desirous of having, as a survivor puts it, 'an opera-house of their

own.' 'Theirs was,' the same survivor tells us, 'a rum arrangement.' The actors had to make up and dress in private rooms engaged for the purpose. Then to get upon the stage they had to crawl through a window; there were only one exit and one entrance, and the settings had to take the form of 'one scene, one act.' There were no females. Such a combination could not survive. No Eveless dramatic Eden could exist nowadays, and the combination died.

#### XXIV.

### Howls and Haunts of the Histrionic.

**R**ICH indeed are the memories which cluster around the favoured hostelrys of the strolling player. But as the purpose of this volume inclines only to theatrical association and such surroundings as pertain to the professional and aspiring mummer, the sketches of the past must needs be brief.

All trace of the old Lemon Tree Inn (which until so recently as 1851 stood close to the outer precinct of the Abbey) has vanished, and nothing but the name remains. Imagination can only supply the suggestion—which its name creates—of the time when the barn stormer and the stage idol of the hour would alike find consolation in the flowing cup. It occupied the site of the structure erected in the far-away days of 1178 to serve as the bothy or dwelling-place of the men engaged in the building of the Abbey.

### The White Hart.

What pen could do justice to the historic glories of the old WHITE HART, with the shadows of the great flitting







The temporary abiding-place of BURNS, SIR WALTER SCOTT,  
and DR. JOHNSON

through its ancient vestibule. Like the actor it has in its day played its own part, being the favoured stopping-place and popular hostelry of the coaching times. Most Arbroathians know already that it has been the temporary abiding place of Burns and Scott and Dr Johnson; and when the exiled Red-lichtie comes back to view the ruins of the Abbey, and of the town's industrial prosperity, it is to the cosy nook in the bar parlour that he first hies to meet his old friends and talk over the 'daftin' days of long ago.

It is safe to say that from the earliest times—in the time of Seaton, grandfather of Henry Seaton, of the Parish Council, and Bruce, as in that of Cloudsley)—'The White,' as its local patrons affectionately term it, has been visited by every histrion of importance. In the old stock days at the Trades Hall, in the time of the Cloudsleys, the passer-by was wont to gaze with awe upon the figures of the great as they mounted the steps to drown the weary cares of the stage. Well might the grave signiors who distilled laughter overnight sometimes have exclaimed with Falstaff:

Go fetch me a quart of sack; put a toast in't.

When Kennedy, the celebrated vocalist, was at the height of his profession he used the White Hart Hall for his Scottish Entertainments. In the course of his northern tours Toole stayed here, and on his last visit to Arbroath, about ten years ago, it was 'The White' which housed him. The late Osmond Tearle, too, a great friend of the present proprietor's, stayed here previous to his fatal illness. One of its rooms, if walls could speak, would tell a tale of dramatic nights and post-supper oratory. But these are things sacred only to memory.

### **The recognised Theatrical House of long ago.**

'THE SHAKESPEARE'! Is not the very name an inspiration? It lay back from the thoroughfare in the upper corner of the vanished School Wynd approached by a

slight gradient. There on a stormy night, when tempests howled and chimney cowl rattled and the night winds moaned through unsheltered closes and down darkened wynds, the wayfarer was glad to stagger up the cobbled brae and find glow and warmth and comfort within, and a hearty good welcome from 'Jeems' Clark withal. This pioneer of 'play actin'' was a stout, well-favoured man with a genial smile lighting up the open countenance which the broad beaver of the 'Bailie' was wont at times to shade. He was always delighted to have a 'crack' about the great ones of the time, traces of whose transient visits to the town remained in framed 'lithos' which ornamented the bar. A fine picture of Barry Sullivan met the eye on entrance, and youthful Macreadys long since grown grey found the surging tempest of dramatic aspiration rise under this print presentment, their whole soul stirred by the portraits of celebrities which decorated all the rooms.

### Distinguished Figures in 'The Shakespeare.'

THE SHAKESPEARE was the recognised theatrical howff for many years, and known as such throughout the travelling profession. By some strange Masonic instinct, which belonged to the barn stowner of long ago and was perpetuated in the strolling player, they found it a safe anchorage after the storms of a night. Perhaps Clark's knowledge of actors from G. V. Brooke downwards made his personality interesting; and if acting became flat, then the breezy host could lure them on to more general topics of the hour. It was worth something to hear the late James Irvine and Clark discuss current politics, Irvine from the Tory point of view, the other from the severely Radical. Visitors got more for their money than ale. Wilson Barrett, M'Neill, J. B. Watson, Frank Hill, old Morton, and even the great theatrical ladies of that day, dropped in for a talk with the landlord of the Shakespeare over a glass of 'port, hot,' or something with more life in it.

### The 'Grand Old Man' of Local Drama.

But this grand old man of Arbroath drama had always his softest side near the footlights. On one occasion Tearle was very hard pressed in St Andrews, and G. R. Thomson and Clark arranged to go there for a special 'Rob Roy' production. At the critical moment, however, Clark was taken suddenly and seriously ill and could not travel. The result was that the 'Bailie's' rig-out—the immortal poker and all!—went over to the cathedral town without their owner. Tearle without a moment's hesitation assumed the 'Bailie's' clothes, his beaver and his staff, and played the character to Thomson's 'Rob.' Thomson and Clark often assisted companies in bad luck to get out of town; and though sometimes they were a long time in being paid back, it is to the credit of the profession that they lost very little, if anything.

### 'Robespierres of Drama.'

At the Shakespeare Arbroath's playing fever was germinated; here the committees of finance met to brood over evil or good fortune; here they met to 'coont the coppers' of a 'draw,' for James Clark was treasurer of more than one club, and was a 'stickler' in cash matters; and here the worthy cabals known as the 'casting' committees met to decide the fortunes of a play and the fates of the players. Many a sad heart was occasioned by these Robespierres of drama, for whether a man should be destined for Hamlet or only for the Gravedigger represented, so to speak, the mere cast of a die. All the merits of actor lads and lasses received the benefit of free discussion at the 'Shakey,' as it was called, and many a resolution was solemnly seconded and passed that so and so was 'nae guid for that pairt at a'; so and so should hae gotten't. This was prejudgment with a vengeance!

Then came the days of 'improvement' which Mr D. S. Salmond in his 'Recollections' bemoans. Away went the

School Wynd, its mid-closes and outside stairs ; away went the historic fishing-tackle depôt of Bowman Walker ; 'Pie Tom's' coffee-rooms, in which dramatic rehearsals had been held ; and many other nooks and crooks and haunts of which memory cherishes the very fondest recollections.

### Other Haunts.

And the ROYAL—once devoted to the prosaic uses of a bank, the ill-fated City of Glasgow—has drawn to its hospitable shelter a large share of the passing stage clientèle. J. C. Macdonald and his worthy lady lived here on what proved to be the final tour northward with 'Rob Roy.' Kate Sherry, the Diana of his company, also put up there. Tearle's great henchman and brother-in-law, F. B. Conway, made it a temporary home, his favourite supper consisting of 'a lamb kidney and a stewed onion.'

When the old John Street Hall was in its condition of dramatic glory its patrons and its players found a welcome spot to wet their whistle in :

To the AULD SKATE loup in,  
And sit fu' anug ;  
Ower biscuits an' a drap o' gin,  
Or 'smokie' lug.

The OLD STAR vanished with the whirl of improvements that

Enriched the builder  
And transformed a toon.

What a host of delightful attractions did it claim unto itself ! The quaint inviting double doorway and the open bar teeming with spotless glasses, which made a man thirsty to look at ; the 'side-door' opening on the Provost's Close, through which conscience-disturbed tipplers darted as if innocently seeking a near cut ; the little bar-hall on the landing, and the cosy old kitchen at the rear. The Star was the haunt of Tom Watson, the poet whose rollicking ode, the 'Waverley Inn,' written about 1860,

hit off the prominent Arbroathians of his time. It was in the *Star* that the Burns centenary in 1859 was celebrated, amongst those present on that occasion being the late Baillie Dorward, the late George Strachan, William Barrie, the druggist; Robert Hunter, the grocer of Guthrie Port; J. Watt, and James M'Nicol. 'It was,' says William Thomson, Callander, 'a day of glorious fun from dawn until the sun gae'd doon'; and this worthy survivor of old acting days adds: 'There were then kind, warm hearts in the auld red toon.'

In the days when a medical celebrity named 'Lord Raglan' haunted the Provost's Close the mid-room was the scene of many rehearsals. At other times actors, radiant with the triumphs of the night and with two inches of paint still clinging to their downy cheeks, would rush in at closing time (there was no ten o'clock movement then) to cool their fevered brows and quench the insatiable thirst produced by the oppressive atmosphere of the stage.

As a matter of course the bars that clung round the Trades Hall were always, as they are still, intensely popular amongst the theatrical world. The *GEORGE* is to-day, as it was in the days of the king whose name it bears—except for the disappearance of the old signboard which stretched across Horner's Wynd from the inn front to the old biggin' opposite, which disappeared in 1854 to make way for the British Linen Bank now occupying that historic site—the resort of entertainment goers. Its hall was also a place of rehearsal, and at several of the dramatic functions of a presentation or farewell order the late G. R. Thomson invariably presided there. He was also present at one or two impromptu banquets in *ORROCK'S RESTAURANT* (now the *LORNE BAR*), then a favoured place of 'pies and porter.' Indeed its upper door was once the approach to the overhead platform leading to the Trades Hall. Through that same door generations of Arbroath playgoers flocked. Orrock's was also a place of rehearsal. The *LOCHNAGAR* occupies largely the scene of the potations of the old stage worthies; and almost every one of the old stock hands has passed over its threshold.

**'Robbie' Gibb's, Lillies Wynd.**

A little, old-fashioned, step-down tavern at the foot of Lillies Wynd (since remodelled) was in more recent days the resort of Duckenfield's troupe and of all his and their admirers. It was so reputed as the rendezvous of the players that in the funny pantomime of 'Aladdin' the widow on coming to look for her son caused roars of merriment by this versification :

'Perhaps he's in the cornet  
Which Mr Shepherd blows ;  
Or maybe doon in 'Robbie' Gibb's,  
Playin' at dominoes.'

This caught the humour of Arbroath with singular power, and it was hummed and crooned in every house in the town, as it certainly is in many houses still.

Robbie gave personal attention to the customers as they leaned across his zinc-topp'd counter blowing the incense of bogie roll into the flowing tankards, and telling yarns as an occasional diversion from the rattle of the eternal dominoes. Duckenfield would hobble in, and, selecting one of the wee round tables, call for his glass of port. The writer had many a long talk with the veteran, who was full of reminiscence when properly stirred, and as a link with the old days of the Scottish drama always adopted towards the young aspirant the air of Polonius. Howard Campbell, although a comedian, would drink his beer in moody silence ; and one night, heavy with the sorrows of his vocation, he reproved the admirations of a drunken heckler with a vigorous rap on the jaw !

**The 'Red Lion' — 'Smiddy Croft.'**

Up in the RED LION, in Geordie Barclay's time, how often was it the resort of the 'struggling' amateur ! Here in the haunt of the smiths, where the Abbey guests had

their armour mended, Royalty their ponies shod; where the fetters of prisoners for the Tower were forged; and where now the clink of the anvil has given place to the rattle of pewter,—met the promoters of big 'shows' to talk over their losses and to gauge their future triumphs.

Down below in the ST. THOMAS TAVERN, alike in the day of its old picturesque glory, with the hoary head of the old Saint above its door, and afterwards, men met to frame the bills of dramatic fare that were to startle all Arbroath. On its tables, on the back of an old letter, with the stump of a pencil, at 'diet oors' as well as at dewy eve, have they gathered to perform this important and indispensable literary task.

'SNAPPIE' DICK's (so called because its one-time owner bequeathed a snap upon the frequenters 'tae pit awa the taste') was a resort of those professional actors who lodged at the Shore.

In earlier days there was an old hotel at the corner of John Street, near the Shore (the sign of which, if one mistake not, is still unobliterated), where actors were occasionally housed. The Shore is still a favoured quarter for apartments. There is a house near the Wet Dock which has sheltered many celebrities in its time. There is another in Marketgate—a favourite stopping place for those on tour.

The actor loves St Thomas for its hospitalities. No town is kinder to the strolling player. It is a bright spot in his dreary northern round, especially for 'one night only' companies, whose stage carpenter is the only person excluded from the luxuries of a cosy bed. Almost before the last of the audience has left the hall he is dismantling the stage; at midnight he rolls himself up with the canvas to snatch a few hours' sleep; then striking his theatrical encampment at the first streak of dawn, 'like the Arab steals away.'



### A Famous Corner House of Call.

It seems to have existed from time immemorial—that quaint old barber's shop at the 'heid o' the Port' facing the Townrook, unchanged and unchangeable, as a landmark of old Arbroath, the accredited 'howf and haunt' of the young and the old, the local senator and the schoolboy, the artisan and the merchant prince—Ogg's! Improvement upon improvement has passed over it. Hopemount sat in majestic glory on its eminence behind it until the improvers came. Down below, on the 'breist' of the Port, the step-up Eagle Tavern did its roaring trade, till one day its tankards, barrels, and scales, box and dice, were put to the hammer, and the Eagle vanished from its eyrie, leaving for years afterwards a square impression to show the site of its entablature. The municipal besom swept both sides of the guttery street, but it stood stock-still at Ogg's. For Ogg's was a sanctuary. It was so when it was Smith's, long ago. It may still be so when the name of Ogg has become a memory. Across the way a whole range of quaint old buildings, with blossoming fruit trees ranging back to John Suttie's house, were ruthlessly destroyed to make room for the 'Soshie' buildings. The old St Thomas Inn altered its face and form, and natives who had been a few years out of town hardly knew their way back to the Abbey gates. But Ogg's was there, and it was a finger-post, a resting-place, a memorial of old times, and they lifted the little latch and dropped in (literally, because of the step down), to find the tonsorial artist cheery and unchanged as of yore.

Here came the youngster to have the threatening growth of adolescent down swept from his cherubic face; the ancient heckler found it a welcome 'rest and be thankit' after his long climb up the Port; the long-haired local actors stalked in to have the sixteenth of an inch removed from their overgrown 'pows'; and the affairs of State and the condition of the local pump were discussed with animation between the patient customer on the

rounded waiting-bench and the occupant of the operating chair. What the latter's argument gained in eloquence it lost in dignity, as, covered with soapy foam, he struggled to escape from the firm nose-holding grasp of the operator ; whilst each conquering thrust of the other received irritating point from the laugh of the listeners and the conscious smile of the assistant as he passed the razor in rhythmical sweeps along the leather.

### A Well-known Perruquier and Dressing-Room Artist.

As the Clarkson of local drama, Mr Ogg has been for nearly forty years learned in all that concerns wigs, from the Court-top of a 'Hardcastle' to the tie-wig of 'Glavis'—the wigs that made old men of striplings and damsels of their elder sisters. The bald pates which made Arbroath roar in the Gravesend days, the toupees, the pompadours, the coiffure of Elvira in 'Pizarro,' the curled crowns and ravishing ringlets which made the lasses of Arbroath drama beautiful, the beards on wires which came off unexpectedly, the crape hair which wouldn't come off at all, the rouge, the *blanc de perle* puff and lip salve, the *bleu pour les veines* that enriched the make-up boxes in the old Trades Hall, the historic hare's foot, are all reminiscently recalled by the old emporium of Arbroath's theatrical perruquier. As a very young man Mr Ogg had his baptism of the stage in the old stock days, when it was his duty not merely to supply the resources of make-up but to go behind and dress and touch up. To how many of the great ones has he acted the part of *valet de chambre*: he was as cool and as much at home in the dressing-room in the roar of stage bustle as in his own cosy saloon. As far back as the days of Mrs Pollock his remembrance travels clearly, and he has lively recollection of the great night when the two Thomsons, the late 'G. R.' and William of Callander, made merry to provide for the Mechanics' Institute. To the actor Mr Ogg must have proved indispensable in the days

when artistic make-up was a source of bewilderment and horror. He saved from many a ludicrous blunder by his timely presence and attention; and he has outlived many fashionable developments and modern conceits of the local drama, evolved from the fallacious principle that every amateur can be his own artist.

## XXV.

## Memories of Musicians.

**A**MONGST the oldest memories of an Alhambra-loving public—'whistlin', singin' kind o' bodies,' as the Red Lichties have been styled—are the Trades Hall concerts, which gave to the town in a very miniature degree what the music hall brings to the cities to-day—mirth, song, frivolity, comic act, ventriloquism, and that form of entertainment so dear to Arbroath at all times—the trapeze. Many will remember the Saturday evenings with Wilford Bowman, Whitelaw, Boyle, Charles Y. Myles, and other musical stars, when Bowman's 'Jock, the Warrior frae Ashantee' or 'Ned and his Ulster Coat,' Whitelaw's 'Bonnets o' Blue,' Boyle's 'My Jeanie's not a Lady' and 'Down by the Old Abbey Ruins,' were first favourites. Time sped quickly then in front of the footlights. An air of audacious and impudent joviality prevailed in the auditorium, and in the 'spoken' parts of the song the singers were often aided from the benches. One night a vocalist whose courage failed, or who had perhaps taken stage fright, stood in his state of petrification gazing at the audience in the midst of dismaying hisses.

Cat-calls to right of him,  
Cat-calls to left of him,  
Volleyed and thundered.

At length, with a scratching of his head, he was understood to be making some sort of explanation: 'Look here, you chaps,' he got out amidst deafening interruptions, 'if





**FELIX BURNS, Composer and Bandmaster,**  
whose Father lived in Arbroath and was intimate friend of the  
late G. R. Thomson

ye wis up here ye wid ken what it is ; jist you try'd.' The challenge was too much. Like O'Connell's glove it silenced the noisy crew and the song proceeded.

A leader among local vocalists, Charles Myles has done much to enliven the life of an older as well as a newer Arbroath. It was a song which brought him first to the old Gravesend stage, and it is a song which is his latest act of devotion to musical literature. The 'Lass o' Cairniehill,' dedicated to Frederick Strachan, has just seen the light and received favourable comments alike in the press and in the drawing-room. 'The Old Man's Advice' is another of his productions ; but the song which will live is the 'Toon o' Arbroath—the Auld Roond O,' which has already appeared in Alan Reid's 'Bards of Angus and Mearns,' and will be as fresh in its pathos and as touching in its sense of local reminiscence when the days we write in have become days of auld lang syne.

## XXVI.

### Arbroath's Famous Singer.

ABOUT the same period as the late G. R. Thomson was delighting Arbroath and Dundee with his versatile character performances a young native of Arbroath had put his foot on the first rung of the ladder of progress. Nagel, of Dundee, who at one time conducted the Arbroath Choral Union, was the tutor in music of this lad, who came all the way to Dundee from his home in Blairgowrie. Three years later the Scottish youth who had forsworn the counting-house for the more poetic calling of singer was in Italy (the late Mr Patrick Allan-Fraser of Hospitalfield taking a warm and practical interest in his musical studies there), and not long afterwards came into the blaze of public recognition as Signor Durvardo Lelli, the Italian form of his good old Forfarshire name of Lyell. His

subsequent career under the more readily recognisable name of Durward Lely is known throughout the length and breadth of the land, although most people have forgotten that in the transition from serious Italian to comic opera he made an early hit as Tolloller in 'Iolanthe,' and convulsed a London first night audience by his impromptu hornpipe in 'Ruddigore.' It was when the days of the Savoy were but a memory, shortly after the commencement of his lecture tours, that the writer came face to face with the Hercules of Song. It was a cheerless, biting cold, winter night, in the treacherous air of the room below the stage in the Public Hall, that he had this memorable meeting. Mr and Mrs Lely were making the best of a not overwarm ante-room fire, but the chills of winter vanished under the warm welcome and kindly courtesies of both. The outcome of the acquaintance thus formed has been many similar pleasant meetings, and the experience has always been the same — the cares of professional life, the inhospitable character of the halls, the personal risks encountered as a searching wind steals through draughty rooms and still draughtier platforms, all disappear and are forgotten over a talk on old Arbroath. Behind the scenes the Don José of the old 'Carmen' days, and the lecturer-vocalist of these, is an interesting man, just as his faithful companion of the stage and platform, Mrs Lely, is an amiable and accomplished lady. To those who have the privilege of inner acquaintanceship there is no pleasanter experience than a lively chat with the singer, whether in the evening dress of the lecture platform or the ruffle and violet doublet of Francis Osbaldistone. Behind the cosmopolitan swing and ease of manner, which are the products of travel and long stage experience, he can show himself kindly and interested towards the old town that gave him birth, and the pathos with which in 'Rob Roy' he renders the final verse of 'Auld Lang Syne' is but the echo of his strong, ever-present home affection.

## XXVII.

## The Prince of the Music Halls.

**A**BOUT the period known locally as the first 'Shaughraun' year, 1883, the Oddfellows' Hall, John Street, witnessed the early spring of genius that was to become, in another of its many famous sons, 'a fountain of eternal fame.'

A half-timer in Messrs Gordon's machine shop, afterwards serving for a while at the Inch, in the meantime devoting himself to the study of 'the three R's' at the old school in Gravesend conducted by Mr Bell, at one time schoolmaster at Kinnell, Harry Lauder, the gallant 'loon' whose name in association with mirth rings from one end of the country to the other, sang in Arbroath—in John Street Hall—his first public lilt. He confirms the story himself in a characteristic letter to the author. The man whose songs, in their rattling, breezy Doric and broad, laughter-provoking humour, are played and vocalised and imitated and 'gramophonously' re-vocalised in every part of the—world, shall we say? sang his first public song at Arbroath.

## Harry Lauder at School.

There are many claimants for Harry Lauder's nativity. Arbroath is not one of them. What it does claim is that it had the honour of his first introduction to the musical stage; that it gave him his schooling, and contributed to his inimitable drolleries that full-flavoured brogue of the Brothock and depth of enunciation which he himself admits imparted unconscious finish to his tongue, first dipped in Portobello-ese and afterwards tempered with the high inflection of the West Country.

Some there are who remember the merry-faced, truant-playing, mischief-making youngster at the school in the old



kirk in Gravesend, once the habitation of the Congregational Church before they built their ornate place of worship in Princes Street—the old building which still stands almost opposite the great headquarters of 'Rob Roy' and 'Pizarro,' and within the shadow of the now silent structure at Burnside which saw his first labours—close beside, as the local author of 'Hamespun Rhymes' puts it,

'The burn that ca's the stoorie mill  
That, clinkum, clankum, fain would fill  
The hungry moos on Brothock water.'

But the mills in which Harry worked are closed, and 'the hungry moos' have had to find bread elsewhere.

Not long since, during a northern tour, Harry was approached by an Arbroath 'deputation' anxious to secure his services for a concert, and, of course, to pay well for them. Harry smiled at their persistency. 'Do you know what I'm making every week?' He electrified the deputation with the amount. In vexation at the failure of the object of the deputation one of the party burst suddenly into reminiscence. 'D'ye mind, Herry, when ye were makin' twa bob a week at Gordon's?' 'Fine that,' responded Harry sadly. He never forgets. His letter to the writer proves that. 'Sell't bawbee's worth o' dulse oot the cliffs tae the lads an' lasses on a Sunday nicht' is his autobiographical epitome of part of his early struggles.

### **His First Song.**

Amongst those who first heard Lauder on that winter night, in 1883, 'doon amo' the fishers,' how many could have foretold his future? The occasion is recalled in his own words:—

'A travelling concert company had booked the Odd-fellows' Hall, and part of their programme was a song competition for amateurs. The prize was a goldless—I mean a keyless watch, and at the close of the concert I was the proud possessor of that watch, which I still possess, and would not sell for a thousand times its value. There was

a certain appropriateness in the words of the song I sang that night, for indeed I was no stranger to poverty at this particular time. Here was the chorus:—

Tho' poverty daily looks in at my door,  
 Tho' I'm hungry and footsore and ill,  
 I can look the whole world in the face and can say,  
 Tho' poor I'm a gentleman still.

My success in this competition raised me to the position of a hero amongst the mill-boys in Arbroath, and I was so conceited with myself that I began to have visions of earning unheard of money as an operatic star of the first magnitude. 'Ye'll hae five pounds a week afore ye dee, Harry,' said one of my companions to me. The very thought of such vast wealth almost made me faint.'

### **His First Press Notice:**

**What a Hamilton-Arbroathian did.**

It is interesting to record that an Arbroath gentleman resident in Hamilton, whose public duties led him to have connection with the organisation of concerts, claims to have unearthed the future 'Prince of the Music Halls.' Almost before Harry was heard of he gave him an engagement without any other fee than a well-deserved press notice. He interviewed the as yet undiscovered hero of 'Killiecrankie' as he lay abed after his mining labours of the night. Harry's appearance surpassed expectations. He arrived at the hall with a complete set of character outfits, and sang several songs much after the manner which convulses audiences to-day, and by his hearers was received with acclamation. The press notice in a Hamilton paper is believed therefore to be the first distinctive *public* appreciation he had up to that time received.

In speaking of his Arbroath days Harry tells the writer—'I learned tae chew and smoke in Arbroath!' What could make the old red town with its scent of caller smokies and brine-sprayed dockheads more dear to any man?

## XXVIII.

## Fairport's Forgotten Fiddlers :

A man who harmonised.

IN the years long gone by the man who harmonised C. Myles' songs, as he did many others, was old James Esplin, who lived in Maule Street, the father of the present conductor of the Arbroath Instrumental Brass Band. One had only to hum over the melody, and the quick-eared old man with a pen in his hand had it impressed like lightning on the music sheets as they lay before him in the little 'ben room' off the kitchen. The worthy player, whose name is well honoured in his sons, lived until April 24th 1886, when he died at the ripe age of 63, having ministered sweet music to more than one generation of Arbroathians.

There was something indescribably fascinating in the old theatrical orchestra ; whether it was the green bag in which the big double bass was enwrapped, the solemn manner of its carriage—coffin-like—to the old hall, or the reverend aspect of the long-haired Paganinis themselves, but—the charm was there all the same ; and when now, on gala nights, 'classic' airs are discoursed by 'genteel' orchestras, the older folks will feel like the Duke in 'Twelfth Night' :

'Give me some music. . . but that piece of song,  
That old and antique song we heard last night ;  
Methought it did relieve my passion much. . .  
Mark it, Cesario : it is old and plain ;  
The *spinners* and the *knitters in the sun*,  
And the free maids, that weave their threads with bones,  
Do use to chant it ; it is silly sooth,  
And dallies with the innocence of love,  
Like the old age.'

Yes, the old airs that still dirl through the years—'My love she's but a lassie yet,' 'Away to the west,' 'I'm a young man from the country,' and the measureless pathos

of 'My love is like a red, red rose,' with the accompaniments on the bass—like heart-beats.

### The Gravesend Orchestra.

No one can think of the old Gravesend Theatre without reference to its orchestra. What would all the glory and glitter of 'Pizarro' or the tramp of Rob Roy's captors have been without those old tunes which are endeared to the popular ear by memories that have blended themselves with the melodies and now refuse to be divorced?

The leader of the band of the Gravesend Theatre and also of the St Thomas was John Allardice, along with W. Adamson, violoncello, and the older Shepherd, the cornet, with Sandy Walker, violin, and Jamie Tallow, bass, as extra hands. The very names are reminiscent. They recall those periods of delicious expectation before curtain-rise as the fiddlers

'With solemn communing,  
Their violins tuning,  
Each other impugning,  
Lazily strum  
To music entrancing,  
Youthful eyes dancing,  
Feet gently prancing,  
Voices in hum.'

### When the Cues were Mixed.

It is told that at the opening of the Gravesend Theatre, Sandy Robertson, a violin player of indifferent ability (although he did not think so himself), was engaged to play the fiddle, but having only a faint understanding of 'cues,' was getting so mixed up that towards the middle of the piece he was lost altogether. The actors, blazing with excitement, were at their wits' end. At length some of the company sent C. Y. Myles, then a mere lad, on the

hunt for Allardice, who by good luck was at his church, and who had to go down and finish the performance !

Sandy Robertson was long a greenkeeper at the Abbey Bowling Green. His occasional assistantship to Mr Donald, the poet keeper of the Abbey, led to the development of some tendency to versification on his own part, and some of his work is, it is believed, still extant.

### Valuable Musical Relics.

In Duckenfield's theatre the orchestra players were Joe Whaley, the leader ; afterwards, Dick Sim ; D. Drury, bass ; W. Drury, second violin ; with D. H. Robb, violin, and J. Campbell, bass, as occasional players ; and let us not forget the immortal cornet which Mr Shepherd played so well.

The conductor of the town's band bought from Shepherd, before he died, the 'cue' books which were used for years in Duckenfield's theatres—literary and musical masterpieces, the value of which will be appreciated only by those who have had the compiling of these indispensable and supportive elements of drama. The older these books are, like fine wine, the better ; and in John Esplin's hands they are in rightful keeping. The burning of the Drury Lane cue books was regarded as a national calamity.

### The Humours of Theatre Bands.

Poole did good work with his band for the plays in later times. There were other minstrels whose work used to grow mellow with every act. There is a tradition—apocryphal, perhaps, but quite within probability—respecting one orchestra which grew so deeply interested in the play that the members forget the 'cues' altogether, and at the antics of a famous local actor laid down their instruments and bellowed lustily.

### So like a Band,

One band which had a reputation for mixing its 'cues' as freely as its potations achieved the very summit of unconscious humour by playing, as a 'villain' stalked in through the inky darkness of the stage, a popular polka of the period instead of a weird and supernatural dirge. Stage managers had to be very active between the acts, for the musicians simply raced through the *entr'acte* pieces, forgetting they were not in the ballroom; and as they only played what they bargained for—'so like a band,' as the Duchess of Plaza Toro says—there was a terrible and embarrassing hiatus, during which they sat quite unconcerned with folded arms while an impatient audience hissed and stormed.

### Vanished Flowers of Melody.

The music of the stage, like everything else connected with it, has its traditions.

A fashionable age that has lost taste of melodrama is quickly dropping behind it the sixteen bars of dulcet harmony which made the stage wooing almost angelic. Gone nearly is the exclamatory chord of alarm played at the unexpected arrival of the 'villain.' No longer does the clish-clash of the stage sword practice ring to the rousing buzz of the fiddles. The 'struggle' of to-day is accomplished without the nerve-raising 'low hurry.' The virtuous heroine of the modern play, radiant in a fashionable costume (glibly described by lady correspondents), would appear ludicrous under the quickening throb of the 'cello which used to send the heart leaping to the mouth. No shrill of cornet nor crash of drums accompanies the glow of the red fire as its lurid tongues leap on the faces of the players. There is nothing left to us but the simple prelude which yet stills the chatter and brings back the wandering memory—'the playing on the rise.' The 'theme,' the melodic

inspiration, the sense of stirring reverie, the sweet flowers of melody that transported the senses from work-a-day to dreamland, have melted away. . .

## XXIX.

### The Days of Diorama.

**L**ONG ago there lived in Arbroath, at the Star Hotel, in the time of Matthewman, a gentleman connected in some way with the establishment in the High Street over which in great gilt letters the word 'Cosmocapeleon' bore its mysterious interest for the young Red Lichtie and was a heart-break to the speller. This gentleman was an intimate friend of the late G. R. Thomson, a patron of Trades Hall drama, and a musician of the first water. Thereby hangs an interesting tale. He left Arbroath in the days before the 'seventies' had begun, taking up his residence at Perth.

Now commenced the years of diorama. There are many who will remember with vividness the coming of Hamilton's moving pictures and coloured illusions, wherein Strasburg was shown first in glory, then in ruins, with all the thunders of the siege borne in upon the young auditors as they sat thrilled to the marrow at the conflagrations and bloodshed depicted on the sliding canvas. The Franco-Prussian war came and went; then the diorama of Ireland; next that of America, with Edwards' Yankee humours giving point to his discursive lectures; and thereafter came the diorama of New Zealand. The company brought with them a boy pianist of the professional name of Alfred Rosslyn (afterwards Leona Lacoste).

### A Boy Musician who Rose to Renown.

The boy grew to man's estate, and after a somewhat romantic career, full of strange vicissitudes, he, having

travelled all over the kingdom, settled down in Carlisle, and from that time onwards rose rapidly to renown. His waltzes and barn-dances, cake-walks and marches, are played in every drawing-room. Not many years ago 'Un chant d'amour' was voted by 'The Graphic' the waltz of the season. The haunting melody of 'Marguerite' lingers in the mind. At the musical copyright sale of a famous London house his 'March in C' and 'Woodland Flowers' each realised something over £300! 'Shuffling Sam'l,' the celebrated two-step, and 'My Colleen,' the vocal valse, are his. He has had the honour of Royalty's compliments. Society brings his orchestras to its select festivals. He is master of two military bands. His name is Felix Burns; and he is the son of the man who was connected with the Cosmopoleon, who lived at the Star Hotel, Arbroath, in days that have been all but forgotten, and who was a friend of the late G. R. Thomson.

### XXX.

## Minstrels and Minstrelsy.

### A 'Black' Combination's Hot Time.

The initiation of a Minstrel Company in Fairport some seventeen years ago made pleasant diversion from the historic lines of melodrama. In the office of conductor, first held by D. Drury, there were successive changes, Charles Spink, J. Booth, and others giving vocal strength to the chorus. The two 'corner men' of its later performances were Alick Myles and John M'Caffrey, present conductor of the choir of St Thomas.

A story is told of the appearance of the minstrels in Auchmithie, the Musselcrag of the 'Antiquary,' still primitive enough in its nature to account for the details. It was a hot night, and the efforts of the 'black' men brought big beads of perspiration, which trickled down

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their faces, making here and there zebra-like bands of white. A number of the fishers in front rose in remonstrance. 'It's a perfect cheat! See back ma bawbees! They're no black men at a!' And it did look for a few moments as if the members were in for a hotter time than they had bargained for, if not for a sample of that rough-and-ready 'black justice' which has been the sport of the Musselcragian from time immemorial.

Under the shelter of St Thomas' Church, about ten or twelve years ago, a Minstrel Society sprang into life for a single season. It was principally taken part in by ardent youths named W. Grant, R. Hart, J. Cavin, and J. Murty (the last now in clerical orders). The 'corner men' were A. Myles and J. M'Caffrey; and the unique feature was a glee party of ladies (not blackened), the heavy accompaniments being played by Miss Lizzie Murty, daughter of the late Town Councillor of that name.

### Lady Vocalists of Note.

Several of Councillor Murty's daughters have attained fame as musicians, and their appearances in public in this country and abroad have gained the approval of leading musical critics. Miss Lucy Murtagh (who has with the true Celtic spirit assumed the ancestral form of the name) is an accomplished singer, and her concerts give unequalled pleasure. She recently toured with the great contralto Madame Belle Cole. Her mother sang and conducted in St Thomas' choir long since, and the family gave due contribution—vocal as well as orchestral—to the musical life of the town.

It ought to be mentioned in the same connection that Mrs Baillie, Portobello (née Miss Emma E. R. Thomson, R.C.M.), a daughter of the late G. R. Thomson, has attained to considerable distinction professionally as a soprano vocalist at oratorios and classical and ballad concerts, notably in such branches of her repertoire as 'The Messiah,' 'Rose of Sharon,' 'Samson,' &c. During her connection





**Mrs BAILLIE, nee Miss EMMA THOMSON, R.A.M.**

with the Royal College of Music she had twice the honour of appearing before Royalty, first in 1895 on the occasion of a performance of the opera 'Le Roi la Dit,' under the conductorship of Dr, now Sir C. Villiers Stanford, in presence of the late Queen Victoria and others of the Royal Family; and later in the same year, at the State Concert given by command of the late Queen in Buckingham Palace, the present King and Queen being amongst the Royal auditors.

### *Fairport a Fairland of Musical Poesy.*

It would be impossible to deal with Fairport's songsters and songstresses with appropriate justice under a volume written as from 'behind the footlights.' Some one more fitted may do so with success, for the subject affords a large field of research. An eminent Arbroathian identified with the older musical interests of the town is Mr David S. Salmond, author of 'Reminiscences of Arbroath and St Andrews,' who tells in that work of an interesting association with the musical genesis of Durward Lely. Norman Salmond, the bass of Madame Patti's Company, has the claim that his father was a 'Red Lichtie'; and there are many in the profession throughout the world—of more or less fame—who owe the stirring power of their song to the same pathetic instinct which has made Arbroath a veritable Fairyland of Poesy. Some valuable recollections (perhaps the only complete treasury) of old poets and their songs exist in a work by Mr J. M. M'Bain, unfortunately now out of print, wherein he recalls some harmonious compositions of Miss Scott (Mrs Crichton); David Carnegie, author of 'Lays and Lyrics'; James Crichton, the 'Whistler at the Plough'; G. W. Donald, keeper of the Abbey; Thomas Watson; W. C. Sturoc, 'the bard of Sunapee'; Alex. Brown, George Cooper, 'Thomas Kydd,' Alexander Balfour, and W. S. Durie. Mr M'Bain, besides his well known contributions to local history, did excellent service some years ago in recalling to Arbroathians

the lyric productions of the local poets of a bygone age. At the same time he did much to encourage and bring into prominence the aspirations of Arbroath's sweet singers of more recent times.

## XXXI.

### How Fairport's Merry Men Wrought Miracles for Charity.

**I**T is inspiring to reflect upon the noble efforts made by the men of Fairport from time to time during the course of half a century in carrying out the spirit of benevolence by which almost all their wonderful stage festivals were actuated. 'Tis said that charity hath a hundred disguises: benevolence was often best wrought behind the footlights under the masque of the mummer; and tears gathered in the eyes of the widowed and distressed while men made merriment and dignified senators assumed the Momus cap of the jester to fill the coffers of Fairport's genteel poor.

#### Thomson in a Minstrel Troupe.

Let the reader go back to the days of the Lancashire distress—perhaps better understood as the great cotton famine. Scotland took its part in the work of mitigation, and it was then that Arbroath felt the strong resource that lay within its ancient walls.

The late G. R. Thomson had already foreseen the advantage of play-acting as an auxiliary of charity, but talent at that time was a rarity. Confiding his view to a friend, that friend suggested a minstrel show. 'Merciful heavens!' Thomson exclaimed dramatically, 'the niggers are the thing. Let's try the conscience of the Queen's subjects.' A hall was taken that very night, and an evening or two later he whose whole soul longed for the

more dignified stage sat clicking 'bones' on the corner of a black frieze, grinning for the sake of sweet charity. Not a single member of the impromptu team had ever held an instrument, and yet, *mirabile dictu*, they clanged and rattled with singular familiarity. The 'Tambourine' that night, James M. Petrie—who is still living by Clydeside—says he suspects Thomson must have spent hours of preparatory study upon his task. Who were in that blackfaced troupe of twenty? Not the giddy-headed youth of Fairport, but its sweetest singers: Jack Watson, the precentor of the Allan Church in Park Street; Davie Dorward, the baker; and a host of vocal talent.

It was the wild success of that enterprise which suggested the more serious dramatic venture of later days. The conclave named earlier in this volume, along with Petrie and Harcourt, leased the hall owned by the gentle Dove, upon whose name Thomson vented many pleasantries, honouring him as 'the pigeon.' Thomson gave up his own Auction Hall in Marketgate for rehearsals until the Gravesend Hall should receive the benefit of a stage.

### Taking Derelict Players off the Rocks.

But the charity of the local mummers was not confined to their own folks. It extended to the professional brethren, and many a deed of kindness will the recording angel have long since put to the credit of Thomson, Clark, Mathers, and the rest of Arbroath's departed histrions.

Many a dramatic shipwreck in the old days left the poor players stranded in Fairport. But there were kindly souls to lend a hand in taking these human derelicts off the rocks. There is one pathetic instance of forty years ago, when the artistes, hall rent, billposter, everything remained unpaid. Two girls named Guybrooke were amongst the victims, and they approached Petrie in the very depths of their misery. He got up a representation of 'Cramond Brig,' the Guybrookes taking the ladies' parts. Fate of fates! Delaney's Open Air Circus arrived on the appointed night, and there was a crushing blight.

### 'Jock Howieson's' Benevolent Expedition.

Almost before the close of the entertainment the noise of loud voices was heard in the regions below the stage. Petrie, without divesting himself of his costume as Jock Howieson, ran downstairs to find one of the creditors—well known for his impetuous manner of demanding his dues—holding the trembling ladies prisoners in their dressing-room and bullying for his account. In a trice the man—big as he was—was on his back. Down the hall stairs swept 'Jock Howieson,' and, taking off his big Kilmarnock bonnet, he accosted the first gentleman he saw. It was a young manufacturer of Arbroath whose name for charity is a household word. He dropped into the bonnet half a sovereign. Petrie still dashed on on his errand of mercy, picking up coin after coin, from Horner's Wynd to the Kirk Wynd, a good mob at his heels all the time. He returned to the poor lassies and 'toomed' his Tam o' Shanter on the table. Tears blinded them as they saw the gleaming coins. Petrie paid all their debts, and got a letter from their father in Newcastle. He was a minister and poured untold blessings upon Petrie's head. How many more will have long since been put to his credit!

### XXXII.

#### A Word on Dramatic 'Talent.'

THE question has been frequently asked 'Whence does Arbroath derive its elocutionary and therefore its dramatic cult?' The question is not difficult to answer when we see how abundantly the dramatic seed has been sown; and it has always fallen upon excellent ground.

Under the school teachers of a bygone time the young Arbroathian was advanced in nothing so excellently as his reading. Smith of the Academy tolerated nothing of the

slipshod; Walker of the Abbey School 'belted' him into clear enunciation and correct emphasis; Naysmith of the Abbot Street School enforced good elocutionary method as a *sine qua non* of culture. These disciplinarians sent forth scholars of whom they had every reason to be proud. Many of their pupils lent lustre to the local dramatic world, whilst the teachers of a later time have perpetuated what they found to be a tradition.

It was an unhappy day for Arbroath when the passion for melodrama passed away. Let those scorers of the old plays with their ringing speeches and moving diction point to a comedy effort which more successfully developed the elocutionary instinct or the gift of articulate speech. We have seen in comedy how frequently the spirit of frolic and gaiety evaporates, leaving the unconscious amateur playing with melodramatic seriousness where all should be uproarious laughter. Refinement, correct and graceful delivery, true elocutionary principle, the proper use of the speaking voice, and play of facial and other expression are all requisite. Much stress is desirable on the word 'other,' for what is to be made of an actor who is illumined with the facial strength of a Beerbohm Tree but whose limbs present no trace of the genius-tread, or of a lady whose pose is all Langtry but whose hands are lost in a helpless restlessness.

### XXXIII.

#### Gathering the Dying Embers of Dramatic Life.

TOWARDS 1889-90 'The Arbroath' Society as such had practically collapsed, but some of its old enthusiasts remained, and these, gathering together the dying embers, founded a new company under the old name. The chief work of reconstruction was done by William Barclay, who had made his debut eight years



before with the Royal Abbey Lodge as Pointdexter in the 'Octoroon;' and in co-operation with Bill Lothian, vocalist and actor of the old St Thomas days, all went merry as a marriage bell. Mr Lothian's record was a long one, whilst Barclay had accomplished a fair share of work. His own recollections would fill a large volume. Overcoming his stage fright as the Yankee auctioneer by plunging into the cool side of comedy in 'The Colleen Bawn' and 'Time and the Hour,' he insisted upon shining in the 'heavies,' and, by no means satisfied until arrayed in belt and putty knife, he became the accredited 'villain' of many pieces. He had to bear all the hard knocks of that unhappy province, getting overthrown and plunged through hatchways, to the great delight of appreciative 'hissers,' and, as he put it, 'with nothing to deaden the sound either.' He found a softer element in comedy 'old men,' and gradually worked his way up to 'lead' as Jim Dalton in 'The Ticket of Leave Man,' assuming finally the 'Shaughraun' and 'Rob Roy'—a wonderful round, involving about fifty characters, each of them as far apart from the other as could be.

In this work of theatrical resuscitation young Winton, a favourite elocutionist, got his opportunity, playing a clever 'Hawkshaw,' and doing well as Evelyn in 'Money.'

The Misses Duncan were of exceptional dramatic capacity, the one undertaking the heavier side of histrionics, the other pursuing light comedy. Miss G. Grey (now Mrs Anderson) was a most important mainstay of the new Society, and made splendid use of the parts allotted to her, having a good voice and a popular stage style.

### Thomson's Successor in 'Rob Roy.'

The Victoria Halls, once Free Inverbrothock Church, had become fitted up for theatrical representation, but were not yet a theatre. The old classrooms in which 'Hodley' Smith taught history at an early time, and in which later on the famous Dron 'pandied' dull arithmeticians, became part of the same structure, and now echoes to the boisterous

sound of the play-actor. The one-time temple of the Free persuasion is a noisy auditorium, and rampaging gallery sprites receive their pass-out checks in the place where stood the plate!

Here, under certain unavoidable difficulties, were produced most of the restored Society's plays (some being taken to the Public Hall). The Arbroath's programme represented 'Ticket of Leave,' 'Money,' 'The Octoroon,' 'Rob Roy,' 'The Shaughraun,' and 'East Lynne.' Since Mr Thomson's demise no one had dared to essay the part of the Highland outlaw. Barclay's 'Rob' was fairly successful, though an incident occurred to mar the best effect. The 'supers' who had to do the capture, in their eagerness to make a good show, gripped 'Rob' by the beard so roughly that off came the crape-hair, leaving the outlaw as bare in the face as a priest, and all that the footlights left of the inflammable material was the framework!

On 15th November 1893 occasion was taken of the departure of Miss Kate Suttie, a favourite Arbroath vocalist of the older Choral Union days, for the production of 'Guy Mannering' in the Victoria Halls, with Charles Myles in his old part of Dandie Dinmont, Henry Bryan as Mannering, and Bill Lothian as Bertram, James Watson playing Dominie Sampson and Miss Duncan undertaking Meg Merrilees. Misses Suttie and Mary Thomson had parts in the production.

### Plays for the Cliff Road Improvement.

When during the nineties the Cliff Road improvement scheme was afoot, Charles Y. Myles conceived the happy notion of uniting recreation and public philanthropy in a series of performances. Selecting his own team, he, assisted by his brother, Alick Myles, first produced 'Our Boys,' himself playing the Buttermen with congenial freedom. 'She Stoops to Conquer' was next enthusiastically received, the leader of the company giving off the irrepressible humours of Tony Lumpkin with due effect. The public

hailed with delight the return of his long absent personality in 'The Shaughraun,' which he played to brimming houses. 'The Guv'nor' was equally successful, Mr Myles' work being a clever reproduction of the eccentricities of David James in the part of the boatman. The 'Colleen Bawn' closed the series, a new drop-scene in the fit-up framework of the Public Hall being then unrolled for the first time.

Mr Myles' work was ably assisted by the ladies. As leading lady Miss Helen Forbes (now Mrs Andrew Gray of Perth) made an excellent appearance as Mary Melrose in 'Our Boys,' Miss Hardcastle in 'She Stoops to Conquer,' and Claire Ffolliot in 'The Shaughraun,' having a bright, impressive manner and a keen understanding of the parts. Miss Grant intelligently seconded her efforts. A favourable appearance was also made by Miss Leslie, who played the parts of Miss Neville in 'She Stoops to Conquer,' Violet Melrose in 'Our Boys,' and Arte O'Neale in 'The Shaughraun.' Miss Ruby Stephenson and Miss Mary Thomson proved valuable auxiliaries. Miss Alice Strachan, a younger daughter of the pioneer of that name amongst the original Gravesend team, made splendid appearances in comedy work, particularly as Moya Doolan, the Shaughraun's sweetheart. Her Belinda, the slavey, in 'Our Boys' was as near professional reach as it is possible for amateurs to attain.

A striking appearance in the company was made by W. Bruce Mair, a very popular young man during his stay in Arbroath, and a prominent member of the United Cricket Club. He was fully six feet in height and as straight as an arrow, giving a sense of appearance to such parts as Captain Molyneux, young Marlow, and old Champneys. Another member was John D. Fox, who played such widely differing rôles as Charles Middlewick, Hastings, and Father Doolan, and succeeded by a deliberation of elocutionary method and an air of earnestness in retaining the hold of an audience. Messrs Ferrier & Anderson of the Bonanza, W. Fernie, G. B. Gardiner, Renny Smith, and others gave able assistance, and Mr Andrew Gray, now organist, Perth, played several parts and performed the business duties of the company with enthusiasm.

The following was the bill of this particular

### SHAUGHRAUN.

Captain Molyneux, .....	W. Bruce Mair.
Robert Ffolliot, .....	G. Anderson.
Father Doolan, .....	J. D. Fox.
Corry Kinchela, .....	G. B. Gardiner.
Harvey Duff, .....	W. Barclay.
Conn, the Shaughraun, .....	C. Y. Myles.
Sergeant Jones, } .....	W. Fernie.
Sullivan, .....	
Reilly, .....	Alex. Myles.
Mangan, .....	R. Smith.
Arte O'Neale, .....	Miss Maggie Leslie.
Claire Ffolliot, .....	Miss Helen Forbes.
Mrs O'Kelly, .....	Miss Kate Grant.
Moya, .....	Miss Alice Strachan.
Biddy, .....	Miss Ruby Stephenson.
Nancy Malone, .....	Miss Mary Thomson.
<hr/>	
Musical Director, .....	Mr T. Booth.
Scenic Managers, .....	Renny Smith and Harry Caird.
Hon. Secy., .....	George Anderson.

### XXXIV.

### An Artillery Dramatic Combination.

**S**TILL another era opened with the Dramatic Society associated with the local Artillery Corps initiated by Sergeant-Major Moffat, Mrs Moffat assuming the heroines in 'Waiting for the Verdict' and 'Lady of Lyons' with dramatic force. The Sergeant-Major's Colonel Damas was a fine effort; and in this company our old friend, Barclay, appeared by military right of being 'Gunner' Barclay, along with his talented daughters.

The following were the executive of that Company:—  
 Patrons, Major A. J. Gordon and Officers of the 1st F.V.A.;  
 Manager, Sergeant-Major Moffat, R.A.; Stage manager,  
 ex-Gunner Barclay; Secretary, Sergeant J. Royal; Treasurer,  
 Gunner Charles Mitchell; Scenic Managers, Trumpeter

Renny Smith, Sergeant John Strachan, and Corporal J. Keith.

The Sergeant-Major's time having expired, he was obliged to leave the town, and for an interval dramatic continuity was suspended.

### XXXV.

#### The 'Soul' of the Scene-Shifter.

THE reference to scenic managers recalls an interesting feature of Arbroath's unique theatrical associations. One may fittingly demonstrate the local enthusiasm in this department of stage life by Gilbertian parody :

To lie aloft  
 In a howling gale  
 May tickle a sailor's taste,  
 But the happiest hour a shifter sees  
 Is when twelve feet high,  
 In a canvas sky,  
 Crawling on hands and knees—  
     Yo ho!  
 And ropes around his waist.

Or handling 'flats,'  
 Some ten feet three,  
 Above the glaring jets;  
 As he makes the rollers merrily run,  
 And blithely copes  
 With twisting ropes,—  
 'Tis so a shifter's glory's won;  
 'Tis all the joy he gets.

Then pull, yo ho!  
 And sing, yo ho!  
 And pull, yo ho! with a will!  
 'Midst the red-light's flare  
 And lightning's flash,  
 And thunder's stagey roll;  
 The storms that rise  
 In those canvas skies  
 Are music to his soul.

### **His Atmosphere, Trying but Congenial.**

Who would imagine a scene-shifter with a soul? Yet if any man merits a martyr's crown it is the prestidigitateur of front interiors and 'back and cut' forests. Who is less considered as the auditors are transported 'from sea to sea and land to land,' from dropping well to baronial hall, from towering precipice and howling waters to painted library and parlour flat? We have seen him in the gloom of a winter morning risking life and limb far above the 'flies,' shivering on an unlit stage amidst the 'hanging' clouds, preparing for the glories of a night. We have seen him in his place on the bridge chalking up the mystic figures in the 'plot'; and we have seen him prostrate above the sky-covers rolling and letting out, and mending, and patching, unravelling block and tackle, tying, splicing, standing on slim cross grooves, sliding along on fragile spars at peril of his neck, and descending the sides of his mimic mountains hand-over-hand.

### **The 'Captain Rattle' of the Stage.**

We have seen him when the play was in full swing up to the neck in work, swelling with justifiable self-importance, rending the air with orders, and filling the upper realms with sweet swear-words if things were going wrong; pushing and bundling everything and everybody out of the way; bare to the shirt like a man of toil, black with stage grime and sweat like the third mate of a South Shields coaler; skimming aloft on soft shoes, noiselessly disappearing in some watery waste to bob up in another place, waiting behind a mechanical 'set' with his nerves in full tension eager for the magic signal to subject those toy walls and canvas towers to an instantaneous transformation.

What must have been his labours in the days of long ago! How he contrived to breathe in the confined area of

his kingdom, how he managed to survive the atrocious heats and gassy odours is simply inexplicable. And yet his thankless industry was accomplished with a will and a heartiness for which nothing but enthusiasm for his self-chosen vocation could account. He evolved wonders out of nothing. When dismayed actors took panic because something had gone wrong, away soared this *deus ex machina* into his canvas skies, and all was right. One touch of his magic wand and trouble faded from anxious faces.

### A Post of Danger.

And his work was not without its dangers. There is a personal 'red light' recollection. The play was 'The Octoroon,' in which the s.s. Magnolia is at the very close of the play supposed to take fire while the Red Indian and the villain engage in a life and death struggle. The lurid gleams are produced by a strong chemical, believed to be perfectly innocent in its operation. This is lit and as a rule, held on a shovel while the red fire lasts. On this occasion the fumes mounted upward with dire effect, for when the play was over a man in the upper regions was found stretched out on a crossbridge unconscious. It was a case of temporary suffocation. . . .

In connection with the scenic management of the Arbroath stage it would take a volume to do justice to the interests and humours that pertain to it. The unostentatious character of the occupation has prevented names from being so vividly remembered as they ought. The most ambitious have had a hand in scenic work, but it requires a special study, and some are masters. Reward usually there is none. The heroism of the shifter in the anxious perils of a dramatic night must make angels weep; and while the little world in front applauds, he views from his scorching altitude the gradual triumph of the bistrion with the ineffable resignation of one who has foreseen the futility of aspiration. He may find his due reward when perchance he has, like good Tom Bowling, gone for the last time aloft.

## XXXVI.

## 'Church and Stage'—a Benefit.

THE performance in the Victoria Hall of the ever-popular Irish play by a company specially selected by C. Y. Myles in aid of the Abbey Church Fund led to the discovery of a hitherto unexploited field of talent. This was the bill of that occasion :

## THE SHAUGHRAUN.

Captain Molyneux, .....	W. Hampton.
Robert Ffolliot, .....	J. Campbell.
Father Doolan, .....	R. Irvine.
Corry Kinchela, .....	W. H. Barclay.
Harvey Duff, .....	A. Myles.
Conn, the Shaughraun, .....	C. Y. Myles.
Sergeant, Mangan, Doyle, &c., ...	Messrs W. Davidson, Morgan, and Black.
Arte O'Neale, .....	Miss M. B. Maxwell.
Claire Ffolliot, .....	Mrs W. Crockatt.
Mrs O'Kelly, .....	Miss Jeanie Bell.
Moya, .....	Miss Alice Strachan.
Biddy, .....	Miss Maggie Finlayson.
Nancy Malone, .....	Miss Kate Turnbull.

Orchestra : Misses Doig, Rollo, Watt, Duncan, Herald,  
Calder, and Low, and Mr J. Doig.

Accompanist, Miss Ada Low. | Conductor, D. F. Hunter.

## Another Benefit :

## For the Elliot Golf Links.

To assist the funds required for the purchase of the Elliot Golf Links three years ago, Charles Myles brought out a company to play 'Caste,' himself taking the rôle of



old 'Eccles,' with his usual grip of its quaint humours. Miss Alice Strachan here again did good and conscientious work, William Hampton playing the difficult part of 'Captain Hawtrey.' 'George D'Alroy' was acceptably treated by James Campbell, son of the headmaster of Parkhouse Public School, and Alec Myles was particularly successful in the famous comedy rôle of 'Sam Gerridge.' Out of that performance there was about £40 to hand over to the Golf Club.

In later appearances R. M. Bowman made the most of dramatic opportunities, his Geoffrey Champneys in 'Our Boys,' and his Wild Oats in the 'Bonnie Fishwife,' being such as may be particularised.

### XXXVII.

#### Arbroath Actors at the 'Theatre Royal, Sunnyside.'

I N recent years an interesting custom came into vogue of presenting, by way of preparatory exercise, the first fruits of any dramatic enterprise at the Asylum at Sunnyside, near Montrose—a charitable performance which added to the already great stock of humorous traditions. There is a funny story of one of the characters, grotesquely attired but unpainted or made up, perambulating the corridors, when he was seized by a new assistant as a patient, and had immense difficulty in explaining himself. There is the story of the comedy widow who fascinated the mentally dull but humanely alert listeners by her exclamatory demand for a husband. 'Hear, hear!' came from all parts of the auditorium; and there is still another springing from the lines in 'Money'—'Any news from the East?' and the impudent answer, 'All the

*wise* men have gone back there.' The audience—mentally incapacitated as they were—fairly screamed at the unexpected sally. These Asylum nights were always merry affairs. Dr Howden, prior to his retiral, would congratulate the performers from his seat in the audience. Dr Havelock himself was frequently 'behind' helping and encouraging; and the stage of the 'Theatre Royal,' Sunnyside, with its electric equipment, splendid methods of sinking scenery, and its sumptuous dressing-rooms, made actors and actresses happy for a night. When all was over there would be a great banquet in the hall, and songs and jokes would keep the spirits high until the hands of the clock turned to the small hours, and with coats and wraps the performers clambered into the coaches, the horses eager to face the long journey homewards.

## XXXVIII.

## The Advent of Comic Opera.

EVER since the influence of D'Oyly Carte opera penetrated the seclusion of 'Fairport' (some time in 1878, when 'H.M.S. Pinafore' was first brought to the town by a company containing several vocalists who afterwards rose to prominence), the ambition to bring orchestral work and the stage into combination had lingered in the local mind. The first suggestion, after the establishment of the Philharmonic Society, was to link that Society's work with that of the Choral Union. The proposal was not favourably entertained, and the subject remained in abeyance until a few years ago, when matters began to assume some definite shape, and an entirely new chapter was opened in the history of the Arbroath stage. The foundation of the Arbroath Amateur Opera Company was the realisation of a long-expressed wish.

This Society, affiliated to the Federation of Scottish Amateur Operatic Societies, has made remarkable headway, and promises to remain one of modern Fairport's permanent institutions. It is possible that a practical initiative came about four or five years ago from Andrew Beatt, who had tried for a long time unsuccessfully to obtain the necessary support. At length C. H. Nutton arrived in the town to fill an appointment as organist, and with the opportunity which his presence suggested of his becoming the company's first conductor, T. W. Parsons (who had had a long connection with the Philharmonic Society) naturally became interested. Next the sympathies of Dr T. F. Dewar, Dr Gilruth, the Rev. Mr Hunt, and J. Singer were successfully enlisted.

### **An Interesting Septenate.**

The seven met one night in Dr Gilruth's house and discussed all the probabilities. Dr Dewar ultimately retired from this advance Committee. George R. Donald was secured as secretary and treasurer, and worked enthusiastically towards making the first season a success. Other active auxiliaries were added gradually. Mr A. D. Lowson, Elm Bank, became and has ever since proved an energetic practical helper in the Society's progress, attending the most of the practices and taking part in the business affairs generally. A splendid committee of workers gave the organisation a fixed establishment, and matters were soon in full swing.

### **The First Plunge.**

Delightfully melodious and sparkling with a semi-romantic buccaneering humour, the 'Pirates of Penzance' was chosen, with Dr W. Graham Campbell in the difficult part of the 'Major-General' and J. Singer in the picturesque rôle of the 'Pirate King.' The vocal labours which the

composer has imposed upon 'Mabel' devolved upon Miss Taylor. Of the entertainment which took place on the 20th and 21st of February 1903 the following is the complete bill :—

### PIRATES OF PENZANCE.

Major-General Stanley, .....	Dr W. Graham Campbell.
Pirate King, .....	J. Singer.
Lieutenant, .....	G. Paterson.
Frederick, .....	T. Adamson.
Sergeant of Police, .....	D. J. Scott.
Mabel, { Major- .....	Miss Taylor.
Edith, { General's .....	Miss Mackay.
Kate, { Daughters. } .....	Miss Edith Low.
Isobel, { .....	Miss Leslie.
Ruth, .....	Miss Ada Low.

CHORUS OF DAUGHTERS :—Miss Rachel Anderson—Miss Barry—Miss Bennet—Miss Cargill—Miss Yul—Miss Maxwell—Miss Morgan—Miss Mary Strachan—Miss Doig.

PIRATES AND POLICEMAN :—A. Beatt—J. Booth—J. S. Campbell, junr.—D. Christie—D. Dundas—T. B. Fraser—Hugh Herald—A. Myles—J. G. Pearson—John Strachan—T. D. Taylor—Dr Yule.

At the professional performance of the 'Pirates' long ago in the Trades Hall the chorus of police created the greatest merriment, the stage sergeant bore so striking a resemblance to a now retired local officer of that jovial type which has largely vanished from the force. The chorus was a rather attenuated one, and a satirical voice in front cried out 'Far's the auchteen?' referring to the long standing numerical strength of the 'bobbies' of Fairport.

### The Second Phase.

In the subsequent proceedings of the Amateur Operatic Society 'H.M.S. Pinafore' was fixed upon for the year following. The success of Dr Campbell in the principal rôle of the 'Pirates' led to his being re-selected for similar

honours as the 'First Lord of the Admiralty.' A. C. Nutton took on the grim humours of 'Dick Deadeye,' and of the performance which was presented on three nights—3rd, 5th, and 6th February 1904—the following is the complete bill :—

#### H. M. S. PINAFORE.

Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B. (First Lord of the Admiralty),	} Dr W. Graham Campbell.
Captain Corcoran,.....	
Ralph Rackstraw, .....	James Singer.
Dick Deadeye, .....	Tom Adamson.
Bill Bobstay, .....	A. C. Nutton.
Bob Becket, .....	D. J. Scott.
Midshipman, .....	David Dundas.
Josephine (the captain's daughter), .....	Norman Geddes.
Hebe, .....	Mrs Bissett.
Little Buttercup, .....	Mrs Parsons.
	Miss Edith J. N. Low.

#### FIRST LORD'S SISTERS, HIS COUSINS, AND HIS AUNT :—

Mrs Adamson—Miss Rachel C. Anderson—Miss Barry—Miss Cargill—Miss Eden Corstorphine—Miss Doig—Miss Geddes—Miss Maxwell—Miss Morgan—Miss Stirling—Miss Mary D. Strachan—and Miss Tarbet.

SAILORS, MARINES, &c. :—A. Beatt—J. S. Campbell, jun.—D. Christie—Jas. Doig—D. C. Ducat—S. Fairweather, jun.—D. F. Hunter—A. Myles—D. M'Lean—George Paterson—and Dr Yule.

Leader of Orchestra, ..... Mr T. W. Parsons.  
Conductor, ..... Mr C. H. Nutton.

#### From Chorus to Chief Cast.

It is significant of the progress of the company that in the succeeding production—'The Mikado'—they were enabled to select from the ranks of the chorus several capable of leading in so difficult an opera. Indeed the three little maids and 'Katisha' were so chosen. They bore the test with remarkable success. All of them with youth on their side captivated more than their Japanese

admirers. Miss Geddes rose above the difficulties of 'changing registers' which are a feature of the rôle of the sardonic 'Katisha.' Miss Barry scampered through her part of 'Peep Bo' with apparent pleasure; Miss Mary D. Strachan was a really charming 'Yum Yum,' and caught the happy spirit of the character; whilst much of the exhilaration and merry tone that pertain to the 'Mikado' found exquisite contribution from Miss Rachel C. Anderson, who, as 'Pitti Sing,' sang the sweet contralto settings with musical taste and enacted the cheerful humours of the character with the piquancy and abandon which can be best characterised by a toss of the head or a flap of the fan.

The following is the actual bill of the performance which took place on 8th, 10th, and 11th February 1905 :—

### THE MIKADO.

Mikado, .....	William Hampton.
Nanki Poo, .....	Tom Adamson.
Ko Ko, .....	W. Campbell Scarlett.
Pooh Bah, .....	D. J. Scott.
Pish Tush, .....	D. F. Hunter.
Yum Yum, .....	Miss Mary D. Strachan.
Pitti Sing, .....	Miss Rachel C. Anderson.
Peep Bo, .....	Miss Rhoda Barry.
Katisha, .....	Miss Emma M. Geddes.

SCHOOL GIRLS :—Mrs Adamson—Miss Lottie Anderson—Miss F. G. Barry—Miss Milly Callaway—Miss Janet Carmichael—Miss Emma Crawford—Miss Mary Tarbet—Miss Robina Doig—Miss Ada Dundas—Miss Amy Grant—Miss Mary Reid—Miss Bella Skea—Miss Alice Thomson—Miss Maggie Wilson.

NOBLES, GUARDS, &c. :—A. Beatt—Master Henry W. Beatt—H. G. Anckorn—R. M. Bowman—J. G. Booth—D. Christie—James Doig—J. V. Smith—J. Thomson—P. G. Hutchison—R. M'Glashan—H. M'Kenzie—A. Napier—J. Patterson—John Strachan—T. Woodside—J. M'Caffrey.

BODYGUARD :—Jas. D. Lowden—G. G. G. Milne—J. Napier—James Thom.

### The Latest Effort.

There is also here given the bill of the latest performance on 7th, 9th, and 10th February 1906:—

#### YEOMEN OF THE GUARD.

Sir Richard Cholmondeley,..... W. Hampton.  
Colonel Fairfax, ..... Tom Adamson.  
Sergeant Meryll, ..... D. F. Hunter.  
Leonard Meryll,..... A. Beatt.  
Jack Point,..... W. Campbell Scarlett.  
Shadbolt,..... D. J. Scott.  
Headman, ..... G. G. G. Milne.  
First Yeoman, ..... N. M'Leod.  
Second Yeoman,..... J. L. Thomson.  
Third Yeoman, ..... J. M'Caffrey.  
Fourth Yeoman, ..... A. Middleton.  
First Citizen, ..... S. S. Anderson.  
Second Citizen,..... C. Riddle.  
Elsie Maynard, ..... Miss Mary D. Strachan.  
Phoebe Meryll,..... Miss Emma M. Geddes.  
Dame Carruthers,..... Miss Maggie Ferrier.  
Kate,..... Miss Alice Airth.

LADIES OF CHORUS:—Mrs Adamson—Miss Lizzie Airth  
—Miss Theresa Bisset—Miss Maggie Black—Miss  
Emma Crawford—Miss Mary Esplin—Miss Jessie  
Gray—Miss Agnes Johnston—Miss Elsie Miller—  
Miss Agnes Philip—Miss Mary Reid—Miss Bella  
Skea—Miss Mary Tarbet—Miss L. E. Thomson.

GENTLEMEN OF CHORUS:—F. Eaton—R. M'Glashan—  
T. W. Mortimer—John Strachan—R. H. Muir—  
James Patterson—W. M. Soutar—James Thom.

### The Power of Direction.

The time and trouble and patience which it must have cost to bring the efforts of the company to that smoothness and precision which are indispensable to operatic success can well be imagined. The music of Sullivan is heavy, and 'the book' invariably requires more glib interpretation than mere acting. The experience and well known talents







Mr TOM ADAMSON



Miss MARY D. STRACHAN



Mr W. CAMPBELL SCARLETT

*(Photos by Geddes, Arbroath)*

*(In 'Yeomen of the Guard' Character)*

of the members associated with the directorate may well account for the one; the painstaking interest of the performers and an intelligent grasp of those contrasting subtleties of humour and pathos that lurk within Gilbert's lines may stand for the other.

The operatic orchestra upon which so much depends is made up as follows:—

First Violin : R. B. Smith—Miss Ada Walker—Miss J. Anderson—Miss H. B. Mill—Miss Grant. Second Violin : Miss Ducat—Miss C. Grant—Miss L. Thomson—Miss N. Rollo. Viola, D. Ireland, junr. 'Cello, D. F. Hunter and J. Thomson. Double Bass, R. M. C. Mackintosh. Flute, G. Sherriffs; Oboe, W. Armstrong. Clarinet, W. H. Stowell. Tympani, R. Low.

First Violin and Leader, ..... Mr T. W. Parsons.  
Pianist, ..... Miss M. C. Corstorphine, L.R.A.M.  
Director, ..... Mr Frank S. Graves, L.R.A.M., Perth.  
Conductor, ..... Mr Tom Adamson, L.I.S.M.

How heavy must be the labours of stage management where there is such variety of detail and rapidity of movement! Those who have been delighted with the entertainments, and those who have felt inclined to say in their raptures of admiration 'just like a professional performance,' must feel considerably indebted not only to conductors and leaders, but to Mr Andrew Beatt, who as pioneer and stage manager of the operatic venture in Arbroath will at least have the gratitude of posterity.

### A Criticism.

Of the latest performance public opinion was very definite, and may be briefly summarised in a press notice:

'The chorus singing was bright and crisp, and the finale to the first act went with commendable smoothness. There is considerable acting and singing power amongst the principals. Miss Mary D. Strachan played the part of "Elsie Maynard." Her sweet and light soprano voice suited the music, especially in the fine solo, "Ere half an

hour has run." Her acting was free and pleasing. Miss Emma M. Geddes as "Phoebe Meryll" was attractive, and she acted with much liberty of movement and appropriate archness. In her opening solo, "When maiden loves," she showed herself the possessor of a sweet and expressive voice. Miss Maggie Ferrier was a good "Dame Carruthers," and Miss Alice Airth played the smaller part of "Kate" with much acceptance. Mr W. Campbell Scarlett's "Jack Point" was thoroughly good, both histrionically and vocally. The merry, witty sayings came glibly from his tongue, nor was the pathetic side of the character overlooked. Mr Tom Adamson undertook the character of "Colonel Fairfax" in a highly artistic manner. He acted with dignity and discretion, and sang the songs that fell to his share with taste. Mr D. J. Scott made an amusing "Wilfred Shadbolt." Mr D. F. Hunter sang well as "Sergeant Meryll," and Mr Andrew Beatt filled in the minor part of "Leonard Meryll" with every satisfaction. The part of "Sir Richard Cholmondeley" was well sustained and sung by Mr William Hampton. The accompaniments were played by a band under the direction of Mr Frank S. Graves. The Arbroath Amateurs dressed and staged the play in an artistic manner, and on the whole the latest adventure in the realm of Savoy opera was quite a success.

The following is the executive re-appointed for the current year:—President, Dr J. D. Gilruth; vice-president, Mr A. D. Lowson; hon. secretary and treasurer, Mr A. C. Anderson, solicitor; members of committee: Tom Adamson, Andrew Beatt, David Dundas, James Hood, T. W. Parsons, D. J. Scott, W. Campbell Scarlett, and Dr Yule; and already the company has under study for the forthcoming session 'The Sorcerer.'





Miss EMMA M. GEDDES



Mr. A. BEATT



Mr. D. F. HUNTER



Mr. W. HAMPTON



Miss MAGGIE FERRIER

(Photos by Geddes, Arbroath)

(In 'Yeomen of the Guard' Character)

## XXXIX.

## Fairport's Scenic Artists.

NO record of the Arbroath stage would be complete without reference to the artists who have contributed to the effectiveness of the productions.

In the professional ranks D. Buchan Young, one of Arbroath's gifted townsmen, occupies the place of honour. In the old days his work was always resourceful and brilliant, and even yet as a theatre artist in London and elsewhere his name is one for managers to conjure with. He was also an actor, and there is extant a portrait of him as 'Francis Osbaldistone' forming one of a trio; Thomson, as 'Rob,' in the act of saying to Tearle, as 'Nicol Jarvie,' 'Keep your trash, Bailie.' As regards amateur effort matters have changed very much since ambitious youths of thirty-five years ago in private theatricals made the most of such unpromising materials as flowered print for foliage, stencilled designs on screens for 'side wings,' snow from thick administrations of whiting, and brought into vision verdant fields and russet woods from such primitive mixtures as Spanish brown, yellow ochre, and 'blue cam.' The sons of the late David Miller, author of 'Arbroath and its Abbey,' painted beautifully and daintily on canvas. Reference has already been made to the painter of the old St Thomas background. Alf. T. Matthews, song writer and elocutionist, had a hand in colouring stage-cloths; also Will Davidson, who was skilled in 'make-up'; and the dainty 'drop' for the Public Hall, unrolled for the first time on the night of the last 'Colleen Bawn' (about ten years ago), was the joint effort of Matthews and Doig, the latter a rising colourist.

A passing note is due to Joseph Edwards, now of Glasgow, who, although the painter in his time of 6000 portraits, makes a hobby of transmitting to canvas the scenes of his boyhood days.

A chief in this description of dramatic art is James M'Leish, who has laboured for years devotedly towards the success of almost every single production. With a capacity for decorative and ecclesiastical art gained in his younger days in England, Mr M'Leish redeemed the primitive effects of stage settings by his eye for angle, perspective, and simulated 'relief.' He can paint a reredos with the same skill as an ivied wall. But he is also an actor, and, although long serving the more practical department, has acquitted himself well as the 'Bailie' in 'Rob Roy.'

James Greig, R.B.A., a clever black-and-white artist who belongs to Arbroath and is now in London, took part in scenic productions in the days of his youth.

Fairport is ever fruitful in artistic genius, and almost every year sees some young aspirant of the palette making his maiden essay on the canvas-cloths of the local stage.

## XL.

### Reverie on Red Light.

IN the days gone by—so legend hath it—the natives of Fairport, desirous of guiding the mariner on his approach by night safely to their uncertain shores, made a lantern by way of signal, *painting* the glass a deep red, and they were astonished—like the good innocents they are made to be—because the light failed to pierce the ruddy smear; hence—the all-sufficient will tell you—they became known as 'Red Lichties' and lived happily for ever after. But the ingenious people of the old red town were more scientific in their ways than the kindly legend gives them credit for. Long before the spirit of collodion haunted studios, helping to preserve the shadows of humanity on glass negatives—at least while the art of photography as we now know it still slumbered in the sweet embryo of dreamland—there was a man in Fairport who made a lantern through which he cast in magic

radiance pictures painted by his own hand on glass. He had also a stereoscope with slides, and along with another ingenious confrère exhibited its strange powers, drawing crowds at the end of every week to an old Museum in Hill Street to peer through the stereoscope as well as to test the power of endurance on a home-made galvanic battery. These inventive colleagues were Moses Morton and an uncle of the best known of Fairport's glass picturers of to-day—Geddes, who still has his laboratory in the shadow of the old Swan Tavern and in that quaint thoroughfare so reminiscent of Arbroath's one time orchard luxuriance—Applegate.

### A Magician of Coloured Shadows.

Something of the magician was born in the man. At twelve he went to see the wonderful lantern lectures on the 'Pilgrim's Progress' given by Mackintosh the schoolmaster, from whom he received his initiation into the mysteries of lantern-land. The pupil soon eclipsed the master. Arbroath by and by saw itself not 'as in a glass darkly' but with startling vividness. Young Fairport looked upon old Fairport in all the glory of illumination and filmy panorama; and the love begotten of coloured shadows has remained, while the views themselves have dissolved into dim remembrance. It is good that the vanishing and vanished Fairport can be sometimes still resurrected to rest briefly before the eyes of younger generations. Some of the pictures of long ago have departed, but the rose-coloured flashes produced with a magician's skill from some invisible world are longer impressed on memory than they were upon the screen, as clearly visualised as when they fell upon the delighted eyes of youth now grown grey.



### The Lustrous Influence of the Limes.

When the Arbroath drama had assumed a greater air of importance than the early 'sock and buskin' wights expected; when it had become that a greased paper with a candle behind no longer served for the moon for lovers to apostrophise; that filmy gauze and fluttering transparencies would no longer convey to a more matter-of-fact world the idea of a lagoon or a moonlit lake—then the wizard aid of lime-light was invoked. How long ago it is since Geddes the magician began to work illuminative splendour from the 'flies' it would be hard to say; but this is certain, that many of the picturesque 'effects' of the local stage have had their charms enhanced and their crudities charitably blurred 'under the limes.'

### XLI.

#### A Veteran of Arbroath Drama.

**A**MONGST the survivors of the old days of 'Pizarro' there is one interesting and venerable personality—James M. Petrie, now in Glasgow, the hero of the 'Jock Howieson' episode recorded a few pages back. He was an outstanding figure of the original company. Petrie was the 'heavy' man—enacting such parts as 'Red Ronald' in the 'Rose of Ettrick Vale,' 'Ivan' in 'Ben Bolt,' and 'Logan' in 'Gilderoy.' He was in the first cast for 'Rashleigh,' but owing to some internal disagreement played 'Fairservice,' and that with a success which made one rival member of the company express himself in a style which happily was not audible to the auditors. It was then no uncommon sight to be treated to a real duel of words between two stage rivals. The first 'Rob Roy' ran two nights in succession. Harcourt, who had secured the character of 'Rashleigh,' became ill and could not appear,

so Petrie walked into his shoes, all sores being healed and forgotten. When the days of Gravesend were over he left the stage but not the platform, carrying on the Saturday evening concerts in the Trades Hall for eight years with much success.

### Understudy to G. R. Thomson.

It was Petrie who gave Alec Thomson—the young histriion whose career was so soon ended—his introduction to the stage, chiefly by means of a concert tour in the country districts, then a common, albeit risky, stage departure. Many a comic song was sung to an empty hall, the only audience being the local schoolmaster and his family. Then would follow the long march home, often through snow three feet deep, the spirits drooping, hearts heavy, pockets heavier—with coppers!

Petrie tells how he came to be understudy to the great exponent of 'Rob Roy.' He had been working at Brechin. On coming off the train at Arbroath Station he found the leaders of the Arbroath company waiting him. A performance of 'Rob Roy' in Gravesend Hall had been fixed for the night following, but James Clark had become ill and could not appear. G. R. Thomson gallantly resolved to play the 'Bailie' if Petrie would take his place as the Highland outlaw. The latter courageously set himself to the task, sitting up all night to study the part! Needless to say his valour was rewarded by ringing plaudits.

Now approaching seventy years of age, he is Fairport's oldest elocutionist. At ten years of age he recited 'Glenara' and the 'Idiot Boy' in John Street Hall under the auspices of a local Abstinence Society. It was the success of that first appearance which sent him bounding onwards. He lived when teaching was a luxury, but he studied hard, and for many years the name of J. M. Petrie appeared in every 'benefit.' He was sought after by the profession to help in their productions.

Many a tedious afternoon rehearsal he had with the late G. R. Thomson in his den in the now vanished Kirk Wynd

and latterly in Marketgate. Both did dialogues—Iago and Othello, Brutus and Cassius, Norval and Glenalvon. One of his recollections is standing at the Market Place when 'G. R.' had an auction sale. His old friend spied him as he held up a big butcher's knife. 'Shades of Irving! the very thing for a first appearance in Shylock!' he exclaimed amidst the laughter of the assembled crowd.

## XLII.

### Players of To-Day.

**A**RBROATH has lost something of the competitive instinct of other days, but apparently none of the old fervour, for every year brings its squad of ardent recruits. The undiminished interest of Charles Myles still imparts encouragement to local effort. From the time of the Gravesend Theatre until his appearance as 'Old Eccles' in 'Caste,' two years ago, he has been devoted to the cause with which he has been so long identified. His first appearance was as 'Jean M'Alpine'—'doubling' for 'Andrew Fairservice.' He played small parts in 'Gilderoy,' 'Rob Roy,' 'Luke the Labourer,' and 'Pizarro.' The 'Guide' of 1874 bears testimony to his work as a comedian, and in later years to his versatility as 'Widow Melnotte' in 'The Lady of Lyons,' 'Mrs Montgomery Brown' in 'Time and the Hour,' 'Melter Moss,' the Jew, in 'The Ticket of Leave Man,' and 'Fred Faggles' in 'The British Flag.'

### The Modern St Thomas.

Even the modern St Thomas still carries on the traditions of the sixties under the honorary guidance of the Rev. J. V. M'Donald, the active presidency of James Stuart, and an active committee consisting of J. King, J. Pringle, and R. Reid.

John Quinn, veteran and survivor of the old St Thomas,

in his capacity of stage manager still guides aspiring youth through the mazes of dramatic life. He is himself humorist-in-chief. The 'heavies' are undertaken by R. P. Toy, the secretary of the Club, J. King treading the stage as walking gentleman. G. Smith is a good 'lead,' and the secondary comic parts pertain to G. Hastings. More general honours are distributed amongst N. Lynch, J. Carlin, A. Connell, G. Pringle, and G. Zerafa.

The ladies are Misses Maggie King, Bella Ritchie, Lizzie O'Connor, Miss Leslie, Alice Kelly, and Agnes M'Caffrey—a goodly list, all thoroughly enthusiastic.

The musical element is attended to by J. King.

With the old and unmitigable passion for Boucicault the company have, even as these lines are written, placed under study 'The Colleen Bawn' along with 'The Rent Day.'

### *Figures of the Footlights.*

Amongst figures of the moment connected with the work of the drama in the town where it has held such long and interesting lease there are several in the Arbroath Club who have taken an outstanding place. There is A. M. Carrie (with a name reminiscent of the old days), who plays the 'heavies,' and puts great force into his work. Other able supporters are G. S. Rea, the Club secretary, and D. G. Morris, of the Post Office staff, good for old gentleman parts. Both are 'coming men.' There are also A. Steven, juvenile, and D. Smart anxious to perpetuate histrionic reputations.

George H. Gray, a clever young scenic artist as well as actor, is associated with low comedy; while William Hampton has taken a prominent place in operatic as well as dramatic life as vocalist, actor, and elocutionist. N. J. S. M'Leod is another comedy man of great promise. He is a good singer, and plays also in opera.

D. Smart, A. Both, and J. M'Leod play 'utility' parts with all the appearance of budding promise.

Death has been very busy in the dramatic ranks of recent years. There was Ralph B. S. Gouck, the 'Red

Indian' of the 'Octoroon,' an actor of good appearance and style, who died within the present year. There was also John Donald, a most energetic Thespian, who put his whole soul in his work, was a good-hearted fellow, and left the stage of life all too soon, leaving a widow and several young children to mourn his loss.

Less unfortunate circumstances deprived Arbroath of several of its good men, such as George Smith, who played for the St Thomas as well as the Arbroath, believed to have been the best juvenile lead ever seen in Arbroath. His departure for Egypt was a loss to the town's dramatic stock.

### XLIII.

#### Fairport's Fair Thespiennes.

SINCE the revival of 'The Arbroath' the ladies have been a splendid feature. The actress who has played longest and most consistently is Mrs W. Crockatt, formerly Mina Barclay. As an accomplished amateur there is probably not her equal north of the Forth. Miss Finlayson was a clever 'lead' until she went away to South Africa, where—although now Mrs Goldsmith—she has still an inclination for the footlights. Miss Turnbull—now Mrs Reid—who has retired, was another clever comedy exponent. Miss E. Sim, who has an excellent elocutionary method, still does well in 'lead.' Miss Bella Ritchie—now Mrs Zerafa—sister of the president of the 'The Arbroath,' has a good deal of the family talent, and with very little tuition would have made fair progress on the professional stage. Miss Culross and Miss Fairweather are both shaping well towards advancement, the former making due progress in comedy.

Even Friockheim, with the natural inflation of its village pride, is, it is said, catching something of the infectious spirit of its ancient neighbour, and there are rumours of red light gleams and dramatic triumphs to be dared within its rural environment.

### The Presiding Personality in Local Drama.

The active head of Arbroath dramatic work to-day is John Ritchie, who made his debut over twenty years ago, and as a player of consummate ability has covered the entire gamut of characterisation from the comedy dude to the gesticulating Jew. Under his charge the youngest lights of the local theatrical world burn brightly. It takes time of course to mellow the best reputations. Twenty years after this these budding Fanny Kembles and junior Macreadys may have achieved a niche in Fairport's fame.

And so the purpose of our story is ended. It is time to douse the red glim and let the curtain fall. Whilst such young theatrical fruit ripens into excellence and fresh flowers of drama come to deck the old season's bier, let this chaplet of memories be closed with kindly thoughts of those whose names and deeds have sweetly inspired them.

## Epilogue.

The setting sun and music at the close,  
As the last taste of sweets, is sweetest last;  
Writ in remembrance more than things long past.

—*Richard II., Act 2, Scene 1.*

### A Town's Transformation.

IN the brightness of twentieth century spectacle and stage equipment we have all become too wise to appreciate the romantic glow and interest which lay behind the drop scene forty, thirty, nay, twenty-five years ago. The faded apparel and rusty rapier of those days of entertaining stage-craft, which looked so sur-

passingly real to our fascinated senses, would perhaps create derision now.

It has been the purpose of the writer of this volume to rehabilitate those tinselled glories, to light up the path of retrospect, to awaken drowsy recollection, and to bring back scenes and associations of a Fairport that once was fairer.

A transformation has come over the face of the ancient burgh, the twilight charm of the old has faded, and a new Arbroath reigns in its levelled thoroughfares and ever changing byways. Landmark after landmark has become engulfed, and there is little left to us of the ancient town but the great monastic ruin enthroned above the valley of the once pellucid Brothock.

### *Fairport in Fancyp.*

From the long-absent exile such changes have been mercifully withheld. To him the picture of the old town in its chrysalis state of contentment and peace is graven more deeply than any artificial impress. To him its lanes and fields are still unpeopled and untenanted. Its nooks and crannies and 'hodie-places,' its ancient taverns, its gusty wynds, and its dear old halls still ring with the music of youthful merriment and innocent clamour. Grass still grows in luxuriance in its Northern Port, and the peewee dips to the waving foliage around the Hayswell. The ring of the builder's chisel has not disturbed the echoes of Keptie Wood; and in the affectionate image of his heart the hand of improvement has not yet made straight childhood's crooked paths. Would that it were really so. This is the vision which to more than the exile must associate

itself with the thoughts suggested by these recollections, upon which the red light of other days now luridly falls.

### Rosemary.

'There's rosemary,' says Ophelia, 'that's for remembrance.' In our penthouse beside the grey North Sea we may still enjoy the scent of the rosemary, its fragrance wafted back upon the breeze of memory from those happy, dull, contented, old, dramatic days when life lost half its seriousness under the glimmer of the footlights, and friends long departed distilled for us sweet sunshine by their quaint mumming.



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